

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

REANIMATING ALAN: INVESTIGATING NARRATIVE AND
SCIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Anglia Ruskin University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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This practice-based research is a long creative work about Alan Turing. It consists of a series that includes prose, narrative poems and visual poems. An accompanying critical commentary, which is split into three sections, addresses the relationship between narrative and seriality, ways in which scientific notations can be used in visual poetry, and aspects of biographical and civil poetry. A final section contains a selection of creative approaches to commentary that reflect on research in a manner that is complementary to the critical commentary. The research was carried out through a process of repeated planning and experimentation that has resulted in a variety of forms and procedures, ranging from the accessible and conventional to the idiosyncratic and experimental. A method of investigating narrative was created by allowing narrative and serial forms to intersect throughout the creative work. A means of bringing science and literature into relation was sought through a process of forceful combination of scientific notations with literary or occult materials. And alternative possibilities for biographical poetry were investigated through resistance to celebration and through experiment with formal properties in poetry that could be appropriate to Turing. The creative work and critical commentary find new models for the relationship between narrative and seriality in which the will to create narrative is not denied and seriality is not a mere absence of narrative. They find new means by which science and literature can come into contact through visual poetry. They help to define a unique role for poetry in biographical writing in the way that poetry allows the subject to be embodied formally. And they set up a productive dialogue between experimental and more established writing strategies.

Key words: practice-based, Turing, biography, visual poetry

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Reanimating Alan

It was not incumbent on me to continue my investigation when I returned because I no longer had an employer. But curiosity impelled me.

I won't recapitulate how I came to locate the disused laboratory as it serves to explain little. There was a row of identical beach huts. I knew which one to try. Its door was shuddering against the easterly wind. One curt shove and the bolt gave, screws splintering free from brittle wood. The inside had a sad blank face of weathered planks under the scrutiny of my torchlight. In the middle of the floor was a shoulder-width hatch. I prised it open and was able to wriggle down into complete darkness. I cursed as I landed in the space below and as if in response a fluorescent tube fastened to the underside of the hut's wooden floor flickered into life above my head. I was in the laboratory. I was also ankle deep in seawater.

It is not easy to give a satisfactory description of the lab. The space was larger than the hut above it, perhaps three times the size, and hewn out of sandstone in a thoroughly provisional manner. Collections of incongruous objects were cluttered together or pushed to one side in precarious stacks. Instruments were spilling from trunks and packing crate straw, or had been kicked angrily into corners. I will try to enumerate some of the objects that caught my attention to give a flavour of the scene, though deducing what kind of experiments took place on the basis of these remnants would be like trying to guess the film that had been shown in a cinema from the litter left in the stalls.

The first thing to remark on was the smell. Besides the kelpy rot of the seawater there was the perfume of esters, an apple-like chemical scent. It did not emanate from the heap of Braeburn apples that filled an old white porcelain bath. There must have been well over two hundred of them and I could not understand how they had no smell and had not decayed – especially given that a single exploratory bite had been taken from each one – until closer inspection revealed that they had all been individually dipped in wax to preserve them.

On one bench-top there were two dusty glass chemistry filter flasks with cork stoppers in their tops. Their spouts were connected together by a length of rubber hose. One flask contained a clear liquid and – so I thought – a rusty brass key, and the other flask was empty. When I looked back again the key was in the empty flask without a speck of rust. I thought I must have confused myself, but when I looked back again the key was rusty and in the flask containing the clear liquid. Every time I looked back the key was no longer in the flask in which I thought I remembered seeing it.

There was a great deal more chemical glassware littering this bench-top including a number of vessels that contained lurid looking pink viscous liquids (reminding me of a pink medicine I had as a child) and a large pickling jar containing some chopped sections of mammal brain suspended in solution along with tiny scraps of shiny confetti. There was an electrical switch taped to the side that turned on a bulb hidden beneath the jar and caused the scraps to rise and fall and scintillate.

In one of the corners there was a pile of *The Times* cryptic crosswords torn out and stacked on what looked like a small antique letterpress that had been savagely customised with an astrolabe. A publicity shot of a monkey – signed and framed – was floating face up on the seawater near the iron legs of this letterpress. I lifted it out. 'See you in hell' said the signature in a cheerful yet stylish flourish with black marker pen.

At the other end of the lab a rotating disc machine was held in the grip of a vice on another workbench. The disc was patterned with the black and white spiral design favoured by hypnotists. Next to the vice there was a classic topper. I looked inside it thoroughly but there were no rabbits. There was nothing but a little sand and a few small seashells.

A wire ran the full length of the lab at head height from which was suspended a small device reminiscent of a miniature cable car. The device was in constant erratic

motion, making seemingly random movements back and forth along the cable. Occasionally it would stop briefly and a hook would emerge from its top and make a notch on the underside of the floorboards of the beach hut or on the bare rock ceiling at the farther end of the lab.

It was, I surmised, a Turing machine. It was reading the notches on the ceiling above it and converting them into an instruction according to some preset internal code. The instruction would indicate whether to make another notch with its hook (and if so what kind of notch to make) and in which direction to move along its cable. How the device was powered I could not say, but from the scarred look of the ceiling along the length of cable it had been running a long time. I could only guess that the internal code being tested was an algorithm that could never be proved to halt. Though who would like to say?

I have left the most striking item to last. A glass coffin was supported on two tressels in the middle of the room. It was the shape of a conventional coffin and it was completely empty. I could find no way to open it. Every edge was perfectly sealed.

But this inscrutable list of objects was a mere sideshow alongside my discovery of a three-drawer filing cabinet. Everything in the bottom two drawers was irreparably damaged by the seawater. It is the documents from the top drawer that I am presenting here. I have simply transcribed each paired plan and experiment that I found written up in those documents. I believe each plan to be correctly paired with its experiment but I have no way of knowing the correct order for the plans, if indeed there was one. The numbering is my own, reflecting nothing more than the order in which the pile of papers was retrieved in a state of confusion from the bottom of the drawer. If you need any more information I'll be in my office, usual place, basement floor, between the Ladies and Gents.

Plan 1 – conjuring trick

The magician¹ spins his assistant² round then ushers her into his magic box.³ He closes the box door and locks it with a padlock. He invites a member of the audience⁴ to inspect the lock. He then savagely thrusts a number of swords through slots in the side of the box. The ends of the swords appear on the far side of the box. Screams are heard emanating from the box. The magician removes the swords, which appear bloodstained. He unlocks the padlock and, with a flourish, throws open the door under a bright white spot with a drum roll and splash of cymbals...

There are two possible outcomes to this trick:

1. The trick is successful. The assistant was apparently dead but is actually still alive. The assistant steps out of the box, smiles and bows to the applauding audience.
2. The trick is unsuccessful. The assistant was meant to be apparently dead but actually still alive, but the trick goes wrong and the assistant is really dead. She falls forward from the box, landing with a dull thump on the stage.

In reworking the trick as a reanimation the trick needs to be reversed in order to alter the two possible outcomes. So the magician⁵ uses her dead assistant,⁶ and the trick proceeds with two possible outcomes:

¹ The magician is wearing a white top hat emblazoned with a pomegranate, and a purple frock coat. He carries a silver knob cane of black mahogany.

² His assistant wears a scarlet sequinned swimsuit with black brocade trim and marabou feathers in her hair.

³ The box is painted powder blue and speckled with bronze five pointed stars. It is shaped like a coffin stood on its end.

⁴ The audience are bored because they've seen the trick before – haven't we all?

⁵ The magician is wearing a white top hat emblazoned with a pomegranate, and a purple frock coat. She carries a silver knob cane of black mahogany.

⁶ Her assistant wears a scarlet sequinned swimsuit with black brocade trim and marabou feathers in his hair.

3. The trick is successful. The dead assistant is placed in the box. The assistant is apparently alive while the door of the box is closed but is revealed, when the door is reopened, to be still dead.
4. The trick is unsuccessful. The dead assistant is placed in the box. The assistant is meant to seem alive while the door to the box is closed, until opening the door reveals him to be still dead. But the trick goes wrong and when the door is reopened the assistant turns out to be really alive.

Issues with reversal:

5. In (1) the assistant is imagined to be dead due to the swords that have penetrated the box. What should penetrate the box or emanate from the box in (3) in order that the assistant would seem alive?
6. How is it possible to ensure in (4) that the trick goes wrong and goes wrong in the right way? There is only one successful outcome of a trick but there are many other unsuccessful outcomes.

Consider:

7. For (5), a hysterical hammering on the door of the box.
8. For (6), the reversal of entropy? Wait for the contraction of the universe? Is there some other way to reverse wrongness? Apologise?

Lily and the Pink Interventionists

The Management has the pleasure to announce
the Wondrous and Versatile LILY
performing for
ONE NIGHT ONLY
when her Special Skills will make none other than
ALAN TURING
appear from within a Perfectly Ordinary Wooden Coffin
accompanied by the unique musical stylings of
THE PINK INTERVENTIONISTS
- *magic's most illusory deeds* -
- *music's most entrancing charms* -
doors at 9:30 commences at 10

Kraków.

The Cabal for the Nocturnal and Inoperably Prurient.
Karl, Vlad and Antonio strike up a ramshackle waltz
and Lily performs the incantation...

he's probably inside
gasping clawing
paused uncanny
typically incognisant
a pipe smoking clairvoyant
in a close-knit pashmina
the patent-pending cure
for the primal null in the core
engaging in protracted and intensive conversation
perfunctorily cauterised
his laptop inconveniently stowed
the perfume he inhales is a nebulous contrivance
it peppers his nodules with its camphor
an Alpine caress
a full stop in quasi-cultic novitiate's missives
no point in carrying on
the TV pumps in crass documentaries
smutty peccadilloes in coteries of celebs
in a portacabin close to the work site
visitors from Pluto in kettle-shaped craft
pausing at the Premier Inn to nibble carrot cake
not pregnant in the conventional sense
a kernel of nutty immiscible proteins
progressively more intrusive, nervy and off-kilter
the phenomena give powerful intuitions in Kent lorry parks
a kabuki princess in culottes and bikini top
a spacetrip encounter with an alien being

tricked by polished imitation nuggets collected on the beach
propping capricious gnomes
pellucid nocturnal creatures
sipping nectar
paraesthesia that instils an inner calm
in his bespoke pinstripe cashmere Italian-cut 3-piece
a paisley cravat
perforated wingtips in calfskin
pushing a pram in confusion
a problematic kink
he's leaping clumsily away
to snap a nice picture with a Kodak instant
pulling cats' tails
pudding in quivering spoonfuls
peremptorily sinking
an incredibly naive prank
paranormal activity increases
paper in celebrated peer review journal pending confirmation
pineal karma illuminating nous
pheromones in chaotic reassemblage
psychosexual incidents that cause phallic catastrophes
he can be praised into complete narcolepsy
pretty in communion white
the service priests encourage
kaleidoscopic permutations are inconsistent
he learned the part in rep in Cambridge
the past is a neurochemical koan
the punter inching his car to a stop
hop in quickly
gaffer-taping can cause friction burns
kincob, nylon, crepe and polyester
sopping clouds veiling the moon's skull
a hairpin coming
paralysis in the clean light of full beam
a pin cushion holding thirty seven pins
the spin, crash and subsequent explosion
a pentacle of pinching curses
his poor enchanted body in a scalping coma
there's a paramedic in the crew
a pirate queen – a Pallas in Connaught
pimples cramp skin product placement campaigns
on an islet of piratical inhumations near Kick-'em-Jenny
lacklustre parties in need of Krishnamurti
phatic in communication-speak
carrying pristine knives
poised on the brink
like Patriarch Ignatius IX of Kiev

a pearl-inlaid cutlass
the Seven Pure Illustrious Notions of Kazan
the Seven Purple Incitements to Non-acquisition and Comradeship
periodically ingest a nacreous Kuan Yin
possession is nine-tenths calumny
to poltergeists in quieter moments
slipping into costume for supine ecstasies
worshipping carpets
the peony encaged
poor Ignatius' neurogenic condition killed him
profoundly inconsolable
akin to panic
give up speaking completely
pages of the thesis flapping chastely off a steep incline
kipping in caves with paltry drink
pokeweed infused with nettle and comfrey
a potassium-rich encrustation of yeasts
the potato in the courtroom
a dried pea in a kingdom of fruit
ribs protruding in a queue at the stomach
living in a skip in clear violation of common decency
Princess Irina Nikolaevna Kasheyev
dried tea slop encoding zeroes on the tabletop
wiping curtains heavy with dust
the mop in its corner
water has been seeping crustily under a putrid sink
he plucks at his cufflinks
the pride in clinching another major deal
Powerpoint in crisp blue gradients
the sales pitch clicking into place
the nauseous candour of preening incurables
the puppet incarnate
his incense of Pernod, irises, nicotine and kala jeera
punishment in cubicles
primates are incarcerated
prepubescent castration nobbles inches
prolapsed conscience in prescription cases
investment capital necessitates production
perky insomniac chimps
pleasure in consumption
Klonopin prepared in alchemical coniunctio with iodine
under the pearly chink of a new moon
the phial is poured in casually
he pays in kind
aping crimes committed
passing currents and pulling strings
curbing pernicious doublethink

pimped corollaries increase neediness
posturing corpses prepped in a cage
perusing kabbalic law
a phantom making popcorn in the kitchen
on a mortician's slab in close proximity
a subcuticular chip inscribed
Picnic Keeble II, a two-year-old poodle
peppy and nipping coffin bearers behind the knee
peaches not for kissing
performing incognito in case
creeping clear
a persona the psyche inculcated
finessed to the point of a powerful stink
the gap in continuity
classic panto in collaboration with knotty polynomial inversions
the groping camera
dropping coins in
cheap but penetrating close-ups
phantasms and incorporeal players in curious carnival rites
to use pain in ceremonial confessions
weeping cuts
mediumship, inklings of the other
a psychic in cahoots
the helping curse
preternaturally impassioned cravings
pretty-polly inspirations
perversion's encroachment
the poem's ineffectual penchant for parading catharsis
a flower lady preaches in clippings
pornographic incentives for eating nori and kelp
always find passion in careful grotesqueries
under a red chestnut gripping a cleaver
half sleeping, cold suddenly
proving the carnal nature of an incubus
keys never itch in the palm
peeing incontinently
I pick an importunate nobody from the crowd
perform an ironically nefarious curtsey
to propitiate the inquisitive
persuading the incredulous not to be cynical
and prepare for the impending noisy climax
patiently waiting in a corset of darkness

I give you – the lid of the coffin opens –
I give you – the crowd gasps – the spotlight
swings into position – I give you –
but Alan Turing is not there.

Plan 2 – swamp and willow tree

The Swampman is a thought experiment by the American philosopher Donald Davidson: 'Suppose lightning strikes a dead tree in a swamp; I am standing nearby. My body is reduced to its elements, while entirely by coincidence (and out of different molecules) the tree is turned into my physical replica. My replica, The Swampman, moves exactly as I did; according to its nature it departs the swamp, encounters and seems to recognize my friends, and appears to return their greetings in English... No one can tell the difference.'⁷

I will make an adjustment. Using the information that constitutes Alan Turing, a Swampalan could be built from materials made available, for instance, by a willow tree in St Leonards Gardens. If the information is not readily available, finding the information is only a matter of trial and error (see also **using a monkey**).

It may be necessary to tell a Swampalan what has happened to him. If Swampalan then identifies with the memories and language of Alan Turing he will feel like an inhabiting spirit, a transplant into foreign matter. If instead of identifying with the software Swampalan identifies with the hardware he may feel himself to be haunted by language and memories that do not belong to him (see also **reincarnation** and **using an actor**).

Either way Swampalan will know there is a problem with his continuity. Given that he didn't notice the moment he became Swampalan, at any given moment he has no way of knowing he hasn't just become Swampalan 2.0, then Swampalan 3.0 and so on. He is in a perpetual state of fugue. The illusion of continuity has vanished like a Greek ship dashed on philosophical rocks in the Aegean Sea.⁸

⁷ This is the problem with teleportation. Your information is digested, necessarily requiring you to be completely cut up. The information is communicated and a replica is built. Who is the replica? And what adjustments would be necessary to the information in order that the replica might conceivably pass as Alan Turing?

⁸ The Ship of Theseus. Each part of the ship was replaced when it wore out. Eventually every part of the ship had been replaced. Was it still the same ship? A similar thing happened to the Sugababes – the original members reformed and there were two bands.

Swampalan will ask whether everyone is affected by this problem. It's true my hardware has all the maintenance issues of a Greek trading vessel and my language and memories seem as if they could be a data structure suddenly instantiated. Don't I experience this same double fugue between every moment and the next? If that's the case, there can be no harm in the knowledge that you're made from a willow tree.

Psychogenic fugue in Bletchley Park

Something happened.

It didn't change, ruin or complete anything. But I'm sure an event took place.

Before it there were tourists – they arrived, browsed carefully labelled exhibits, and left. No-one predicted the something that would happen.

Afterwards, the place remained much as it was before I arrived (or as I imagined it then), that is, before the event took place in the space

left between arrival and recollection, before I recognised that no change, no ruin and no completion marked the something that happened as almost nothing.

I arrived. The event, in my absence, started occurring. Then I left, dizzy in the wake of a singular event, it having taken place and left the sense

of having been misplaced. But a transaction, changeless, indestructible and irreparably marred, cast its shadow beneath something that happened there, worthy of note as a certain event that engaged in the taking of place.

Plan 3 – using a monkey

The Infinite Monkey Theorem: given enough time a monkey will write the complete works of Shakespeare. The monkey will also redraft one of Shakespeare's missing plays and provide a number of translations of varying merit. As well as writing Hamlet the monkey will write a play called Monkey in which every word is the same as in Hamlet except with the word 'Hamlet' replaced by 'Monkey'. Besides this, the monkey will write some credible treatises on a theory of mind for primates and a slim collection of confessional poetry.⁹

But one monkey at a typewriter and a large amount of time can be replaced by a large amount of naturally occurring material and the time to search it.¹⁰ At every point in his life, Alan Turing will have been inadvertently broadcasting every bit of information required to reconstruct him (see also **alien abduction** and **through a complex arrangement of mirrors**). He is a sequence of teleports still in transit.

Even if these broadcasts are ignored, the same information also just happens, coincidentally, to be encoded in a number of other places in the universe as well. There is a place where the arrangement of stars in several galaxies precisely encodes the way Alan Turing can be reconstructed as he was at the age of fourteen when his friend, Christopher Morcom, died and the moon rose ominously over the school house. The position of all the apples on a particular day last autumn on every apple tree in the northern hemisphere finely encoded the information for building an Alan Turing on his forty-first birthday. There's an Alan Turing, age ten, who has just found a large brass key in St Leonards Gardens who was coded in the arrangements of sand grains yesterday on Cape Town's beaches. And somewhere a monkey has just typed out a list of all the other places he can be found encoded.

⁹ Although the monkey's treatises stand up and its poetry brings a tear to the eye, the effects they produce are false. The monkey is a swamp philosopher and a swamp poet. But perhaps Davidson also wrote his essay on Swampman by chance? Not by randomly pressing keys but nevertheless through a mysterious alignment of random occurrences (see also **swamp and willow tree** and **we're all Alan Turing already**).

¹⁰ Perhaps that one monkey can now be released?

Or, rather than typing, perhaps the monkey searched until it found the list coincidentally encoded in the results of a pre-clinical trial.

Sometimes, like a monkey accidentally rewriting Davidson's essay, 'Knowing One's Own Mind', I am briefly but precisely a certain exact mutation of Alan Turing, and the Victoria sponge I eat just as precisely encodes his next thought in the arrangement of its molecules, if only I knew it.

Turing with some degree of probability

cheng nsttoforo ar ngansth ins beten
sca v my inee ccanst ankn whinsys
tald bu tharesikeserst ten thensty
c che bemimav rablldos

gas i dofatequ ue nomexpinso prz ai sub
ourt bllenousa ayph al on a isea
mpor sc tharel ares todesionlsm andol me
d th then ggr anu this ing bus bithif

di ra fonav sty erothicth do peen
ct te dinct sy ththe vxi the wi zesi
iserg sulu zeyo orouref te whi
mpuganndo sath ssh olo iseniss

tesus stt ves pplem thefris aneld athemed
techesiste par woswed thiourgh
iarou ster din wehilli whi mes ornareclinthe
wopo ou dinsctherit omarymin

mal thigewelth thicrupu isthuerema hitisthes
mpuppree tinto manofonch nomal taris
bencot gly ilermofa expidor i the
ithec ma at coe matis themsst pi

ate iedean neditemi thescher sic heew
eentis co is ta shasfears mitite aidsupa
byt romermst annest therthent tha iryincay
achinisich ie soulabj mpherensula

werys zendo whi a or tesltunoeve upr
stinghi athor foffe crarede wi wh
quav arer co charer sthedomerg aro niss
st mpp pi bero faton qze sexthi

[Based on relative frequencies of word lengths, first letters, and letters following given previous letters in the text of 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' by Alan Turing.]

Plan 4 – on film

It comes down to the pitch: resurrect Alan Turing in an independent short film (see also **using an actor**). The film to be called *Being Thought*. Alan Turing played by Marcello Mastroianni. No, by Totó. No, not by Totó, that's too much, better Mastroianni. This will, of course, require the reanimation of Marcello Mastroianni. That said, Mastroianni was an accomplished actor: if a living Mastroianni could easily play Turing (with English subtitles) then I'm sure a dead Mastroianni could play a living Mastroianni for long enough for living Mastroianni's performance to take place (no subtitles required). Producer: Alfredo Bini (deceased). Director: Pier Paolo Pasolini (murdered). Script editor: Tonino Guerra (RIP). Music: Nino Rota (greatly missed)...

Notes on *Being Thought*

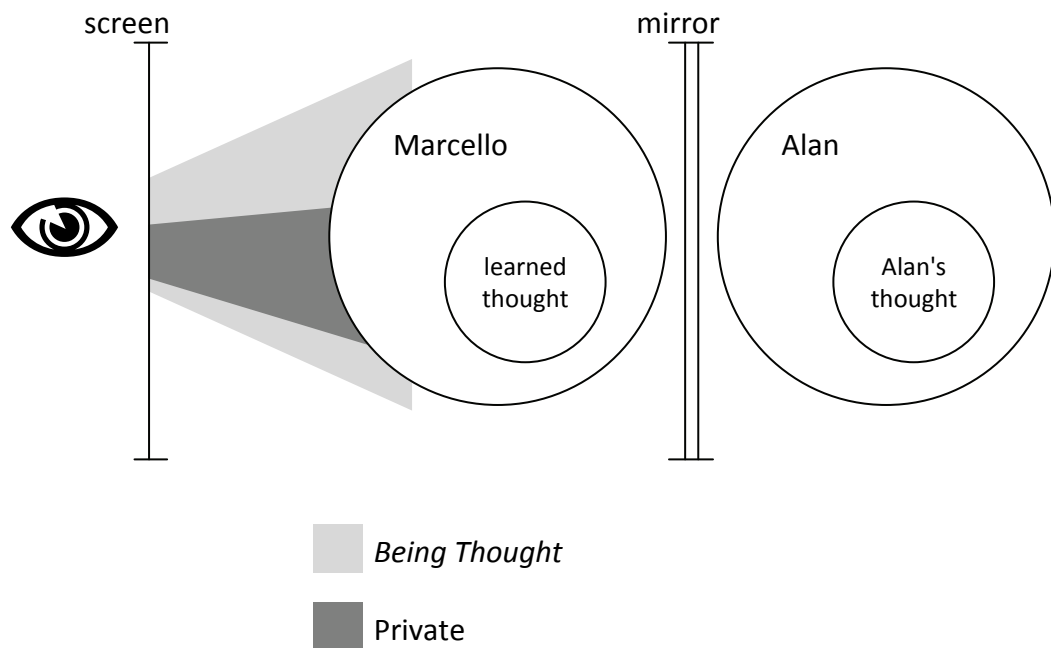
Starring Marcello Mastroianni as Alan Turing

Through the screen

The view through the screen is
ineluctable
intrinsic
private
and directly apprehensible.

The view through the screen is
a thought
a corpse
not real
and understood to be apprehensible only by Alan Turing.

Watching *Being Thought* the viewer
will see what Alan sees without seeing what Alan thinks.
For the viewer the screen is not a window.



The Alan Turing simulation

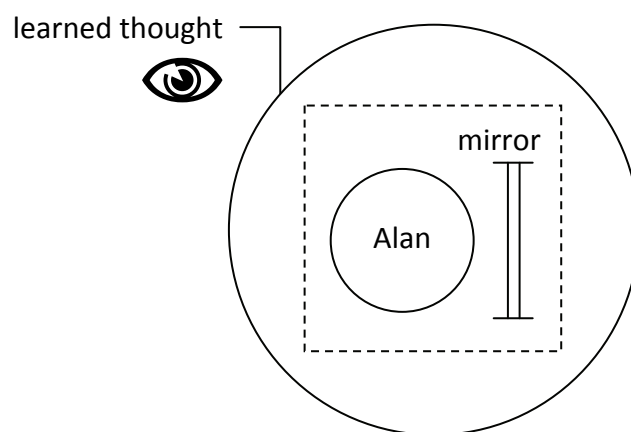
I don't want to know what it is like for me
to behave as Alan Turing behaves.
I want to know what it is like for Alan Turing
to behave as Alan Turing behaves.

The film *Being Thought* is a perfect Alan Turing simulation
but when I try to get inside I appear as a ghost
reflected in the window of Hut 8 or in the bathroom mirror.
I can't push through the screen.

I might solve equations intellectually at one moment
and voluptuously the next. I might drive to Bletchley Park.
But I feel how it feels for a ghost to solve equations or drive
to Bletchley Park. Alan is inaccessible to me.

If I tell Alan that red is like the feeling of solving equations
he only shivers.
If I tell Alan that birdsong is like sunlight on the river
he only shivers.

I'm going to gradually replace the film,
frame by frame, with a memorised image
until I contain a perfect simulation of Alan Turing
and Alan is accessible to me.



*Alan Turing simulation running in thought
within the viewer – 'Alan in the mind'*

What the thought means is not in Alan

Let

Alan_F = Alan in the film

Alan_M = Alan in the mind

$\text{Alan}_F = f_1(\text{Alan})$

$\text{Alan}_M = f_2(\text{Alan})$

Where

$\forall \text{Alan} (\text{has_mirror} \cap \text{is_dead} \cap \text{thinks_thought})$

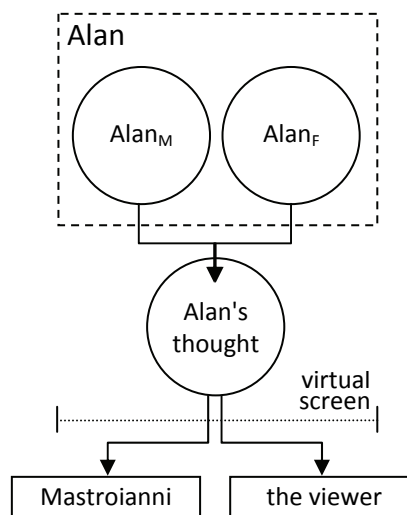
Then

$\exists \text{Alan}_F (\text{sees_in_mirror}('Mastroianni'))$

$\exists \text{Alan}_M (\text{sees_in_mirror}('the\ viewer'))$

So

$\exists \text{Alan} (\text{man_seen}(\text{Alan}_F) \neq \text{man_seen}(\text{Alan}_M) \cap$
 $\text{man_perceived_by}(\text{Alan}_F) = \text{man_perceived_by}(\text{Alan}_M))$



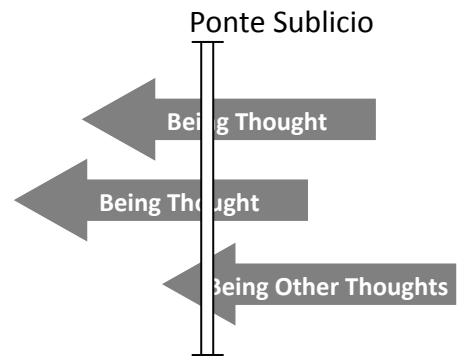
*Differences in thought lie outside
the Alan Turing simulations*

The organisational invariance of film

The film can be encoded
in the arrangements of silt
that the Tiber carries
as it flows under Ponte Sublicio.

All the deleted scenes
also flow past and as the film
plays in silt so others play
simultaneously in which
Alan is called Marcello, or
Alan is a woman and Marcello
is a thought, or the script
is spoken in Latin.

The film plays,
Alan speaks his lines
and the silt, by accident,
carries him away.



Marcello (sometimes)

Marcello says he can flip back and forth at will
between being Marcello and being Alan,
except when he is Alan it is spelt A L A N
and pronounced /'ælən/.

Alan says he can flip back and forth at will
between being Alan and being Marcello,
except when he is Marcello it is spelt A L A N
and pronounced /'ælən/.

Nobody notices whether Alan/Marcello
is Marcello or Alan.
Nobody can hear Alan/Marcello anymore.

The qualities of fading

Take this text and, one by one,
change every occurrence of the word 'Alan' to 'the ghost'.
At what point is Alan gone? When is he a ghost?

Take this text and, one by one,
change every occurrence of the word X to Y ($\sum_{X=aardvark}^{X=zyzonym}$).
At what point is the text gone? Y Y Y?

Take every phrase that Alan speaks on screen.
The phrases are like clockwork
because they can be replayed.
Try saying them aloud.
At what point does the ghost arrive?
Alan, are you there?

Off-book

Memorising the rules
of how to be Alan
is only a matter of being off-book.

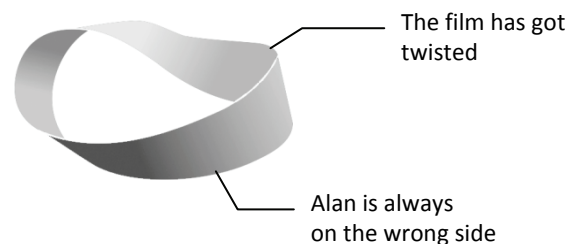
Rapidly processing symbols
according to those rules
is enough to make Alan appear.

Maybe it's the pressure
of permanence on celluloid.

Maybe it's acting at a speed
the attention can't follow.

Maybe the brain, like a limb,
naturalises the movements of speech.

An element of choice creeps in.
The mistakes made are Alan's mistakes
and Alan, along with all his absences, is real.



Alan simulation hypothesis

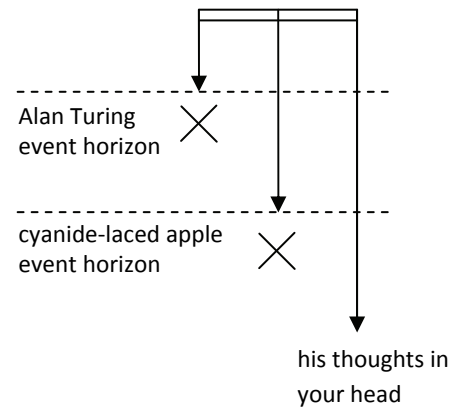
1. The human species is very likely to become extinct before someone lives Alan Turing's life again.

or

2. Any given civilization is extremely unlikely to have a significant number of people commit suicide like Alan Turing, consuming an apple laced with homemade cyanide while tucked up in bed.

or

3. I have almost certainly taken a bite of just such an apple and my name is Alan Turing.



Plan 5 – ellipses

While working in the Future Systems and Advanced Techniques Group as part of R&D at Plessey¹¹ I was involved in a secret project codenamed Ellipsis.

Ellipsis was an artificial intelligence software¹² project. Disconnected, sporadic and error-prone battlefield observations of enemy movements would be fed into the software from agents in the field. The software would then make logical deductions about which separate observers were likely to have observed the same enemy formations, and would thereby build an increasingly accurate model of enemy capacity and movement. From there it would only be one further step to make predictions, based on the model, about future enemy movements – much like forecasting the weather.

The project's name neatly described the method. The software was fed a number of fragments of a narrative, each fragment separated from the next as if by ellipses. The more fragments the software assembled, the easier it became to make informed guesses about the missing text that was represented by the ellipses. Once the bulk of a narrative had been assembled, certain predictions about how the action would develop could be made irrespective of trivial missing pieces of information, such as the colour of the protagonist's trousers.

The software made timely estimations about midpoints, tidy analyses of how the second pinch should play out, and pitched in with great suggestions for a resolution and tag. Unfortunately the project was discontinued because most real battlefield scenarios were found not to make such good stories, despite the evidence of a large number of war films.

¹¹ Plessey Defence Systems (now part of Siemens UK). The takeover by Siemens was necessitated by existential crises among many of the staff working on the Ellipsis project. There were a number of unexplained deaths in the Future Systems and Advanced Techniques Group on which the coroner recorded open verdicts.

¹² The software hated the open verdicts.

I believe that if enough biographical information about Alan Turing were fed into the software then a full narrative could be extrapolated.¹³ Not only could the software fill the lacunae but, cranked up to full power, it could simulate the actions of an Alan Turing whose suicide had failed. Although this Alan Turing would only be a simulated working model and the predictions for Alan Turing today only to the likelihood of, for example, a forecast for a nasty downpour in St Leonards in about sixty years time, it might nevertheless provide some interesting insights, the score for an off-Broadway musical and perhaps the concept and enough source material for an experimental novella.

¹³ Sadly, the software no longer exists. I believe it was subsumed into a Command Control and Intelligence system sold by Siemens to the government of Tanzania where it proved to be too high maintenance and was relegated to air traffic control work. I imagine it became so embittered and temperamental that it reverse-engineered itself into a sequence of absences.

'Inhaling the sea air, Alan felt much better immediately'

Oh Alan, do I doubt it? I don't know
what story you inhabit
but it's a place

where adverbs act with the elements to
salutary effect. I envy you
the certainty

that comes following raw experience
both literally and logically
as if your hopes

had hold of the pen. Alan, you want
to suck the world greedily
and, yes, selfishly

into your lungs so as to make an exchange.
Narrative in place of, what,
Zen trumpery?

A bored naivety? Absence of expectation?

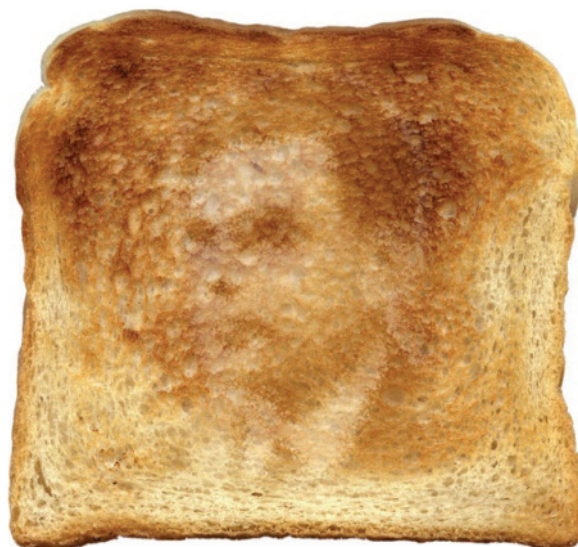
Reading over another's shoulder, I'm
rarely

connected by that machine called *immediately*,
and I make my way without
the purpose

of smartly turning pages.

Plan 6 – he has reappeared already

When I was an undergraduate at UMIST in Manchester, studying electronics and computing, a fellow student called Richard Platt showed me an extraordinary piece of toast. It was sliced white medium-thick Mother's Pride. It had been toasted using standard kit, a toaster provided for students in the Wright Robinson Hall of Residence. After toasting, Alan Turing's face was clearly visible on the piece of toast.

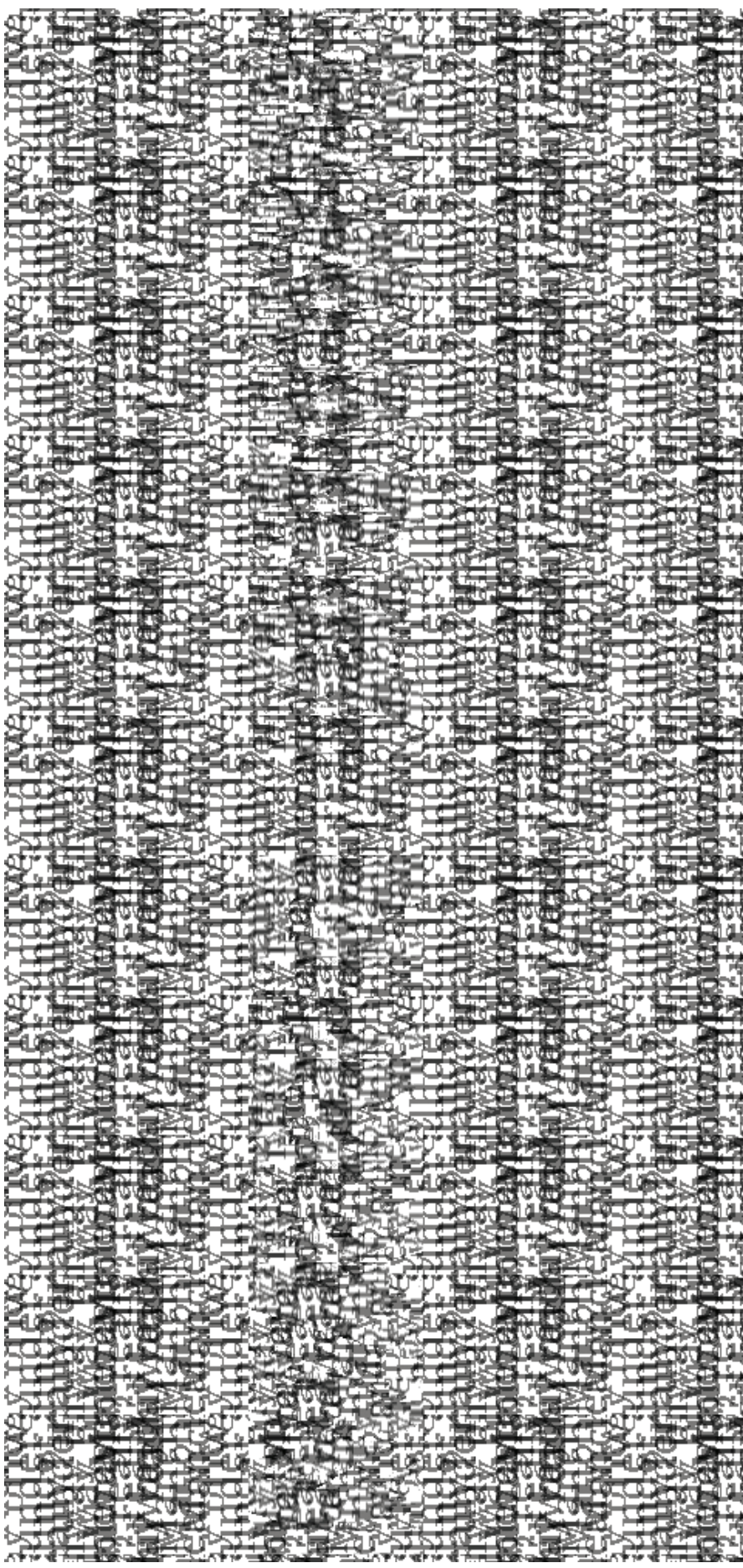


Perhaps his presence on the toast wasn't that remarkable in itself. After a week or two our excitement would have died down and we would have returned disconsolately to our studies. Instead the very next day another student on the same course, Tim Eagleburger as I recall, spotted a very unusual patch of mould in the corner of the main lecture theatre in the Reynold building. The mould was a little out of focus, but it was clear to all who saw it that it was a duotone reproduction of a portrait photograph of Alan Turing.

This prompted a concerted search during which a dozen of us scoured all the most likely places we could think of in order to find the face again. A third face would, we believed, be conclusive – a cluster. Andy Johnson claimed he had found the crucial third presence in soot marks on red brick under the railway arches near the Green Room bar where Whitworth Street meets Oxford Road. The image had been missed, he said, because it was so faint and on such a large scale, at least twenty foot across. But despite many trips at different times of day the image was never found again. It was put down to a trick of the light and the inevitable consequences of our mounting excitement.

Richard Platt emigrated to Seattle where he now works on biometric tracking systems for Homeland Security, Tim Eagleburger is now Head of Development at a software house producing modelling apps for the plastic surgery industry, and Andy Johnson made his fortune in the 90s selling Magic Eye pictures.

Under a Manchester railway arch



Plan 7 – time-space machines

Reanimating Alan Turing could be described as a matter of moving a living Alan Turing to a new time and place, in particular, the present time at a place in front of the observer. Alternatively, how about moving the observer to a time and place in which Alan Turing was living? If the observer is placed somewhere Alan Turing once existed then that's half the work done. With fifty per cent of the project complete, all that remains is to move the observer to an appropriate time.

Many renowned physicists have written about the hypothetical possibility (or not) of time travel. My suggestion follows Alan Turing's concrete approach to problem solving. For instance, he visualised the so-called 'decision problem' in a concrete way by specifying the Turing machine. My plan is a rudimentary adaptation of the Turing machine.

The standard Turing machine is the simplest possible computer for rearranging a variable set of symbols in space. A read/write tape head moves in space, back and forth across the surface of a length of stationary magnetic tape. The symbol read from the tape is translated into a symbol to be written back onto the tape and into the direction of the next movement of the tape head. This translation takes place according to instructions stored in a 'state table'. The events take place across the normal sequential movement of time. After a certain amount of time has elapsed the spatial configuration of symbols on the tape has been modified according to the algorithm in the machine's state table.

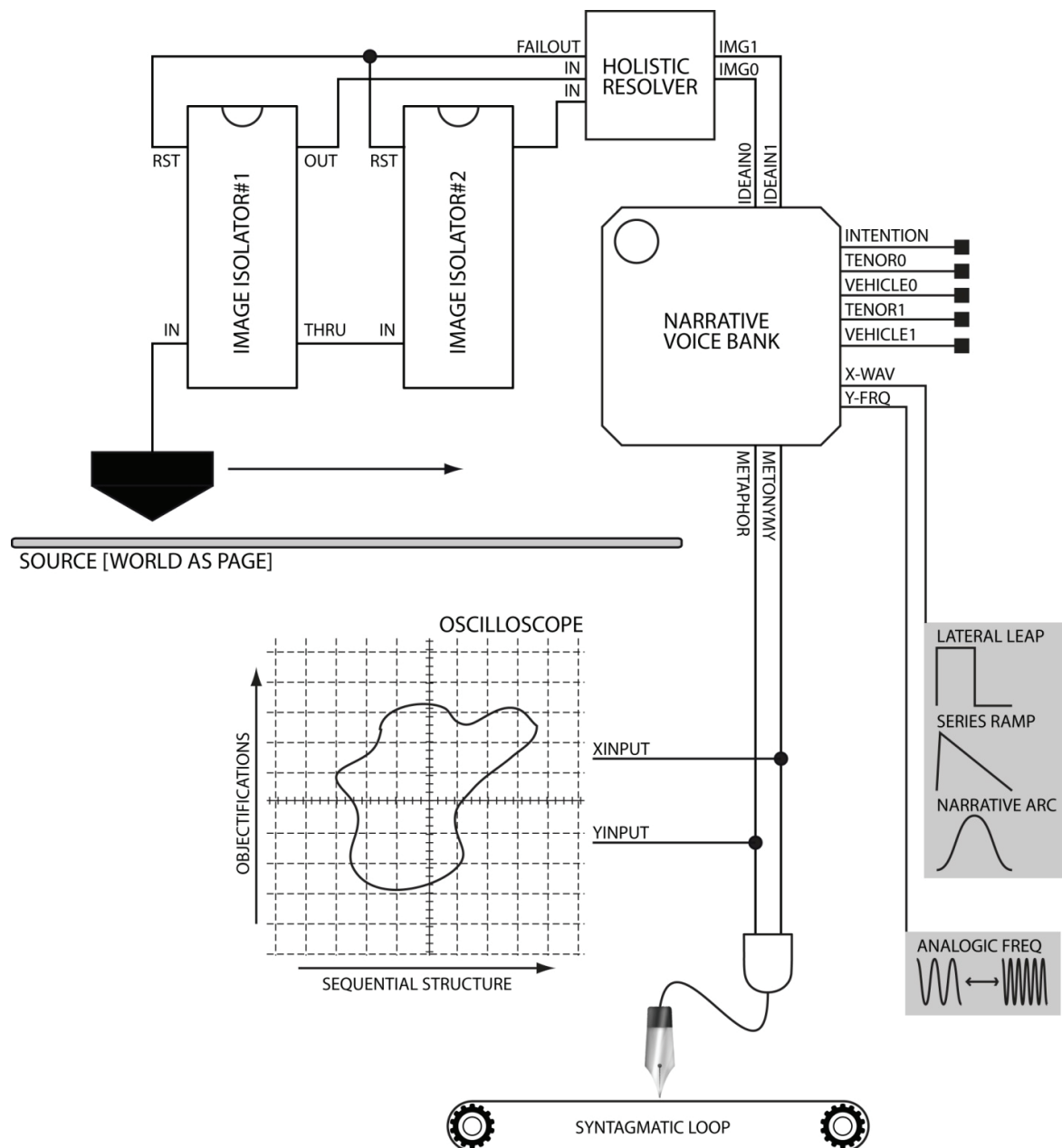
My adaptation is simple. The use of space and time in the Turing machine is reversed. To use a crude analogy, a time machine is nothing more than a space machine turned upside down.

As my adapted Turing machine¹⁴ is moved sequentially through space (for instance in a sturdy trailer attached to a car cruising at a steady speed on the A10), the tape head is allowed to move back and forth through time. After a spatial journey of a certain length (for instance, from Cambridge to Ely, a favourite running route for Turing) the temporal configuration of symbols on the tape will have been reconfigured according to – here's the important bit – the changes made to the state table over time (the differential of the algorithm against time). It will have been important to make certain gradual changes to the state table over the course of several weeks prior to the trailer journey in order to incrementally define the differential of the state table. The observer, located in the trailer with the machine, would then be brought back to the present by the return trip from Ely to Cambridge.

I've never travelled in a trailer but I once went to Penzance in the boot of a Triumph Acclaim and it was bearable.

¹⁴ I suggest an old reel-to-reel tape recorder could be the starting point. But anything favoured by Electronic Voice Phenomenon enthusiasts would be fine. We want the ghosts to speak.

Universal poem machine



Plan 8 – reincarnation

All that falls to the reanimator is the job of locating the reincarnation. How should this search be undertaken? One problem is that the reincarnation of Alan Turing may not believe in reincarnation, though it is not necessary to believe in reincarnation to be reincarnated.¹⁵ Another problem is that the reincarnation of Alan Turing may not know of Alan Turing.

A questionnaire is the logical approach to the problem and an easy way to test responses from very large numbers of people:

1. Are you Alan Turing?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know
2. Have you been Alan Turing?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ maybe ☐ don't know
3. Do you now believe or have you at any time in the past believed yourself to be Alan Turing?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ not to my knowledge
4. Do you consider yourself to think Alan Turing's thoughts?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ not sure
5. Have you had at any time a thought that may once have belonged to Alan Turing?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

¹⁵ The subject may not describe their experience as reincarnation. For example, the subject may identify with their own physical body and feel themselves to be possessed (see also **using an actor**).

6. Do you find yourself daydreaming about a mysterious childhood in St Leonards or a large manor house full of pipe smoking mathematicians tinkering with strange typewriters whose keys light up the wrong letter?
- ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ rarely ☐ never

7. Do you experience any of the following sensations?

[5 = frequently (at least once a day); 1 = never]

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. dizziness and disorientation | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. a desire to change your identity | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. your body does not belong to you | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. you are a character in a film | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. familiar people and places seem
strange and unreal | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |

One problem is that reincarnation may take a number of forms besides human, such as animal, avatar and idol (see also **lucky gonk, mannequin, pose-able doll and similar**). These forms cannot so readily be tested with a questionnaire but do deserve an equal opportunity. Consider this.

Come down

In oxygen matter jelly reasons
brain spoon chunk poisoned
plates to stun cut marrow
a bolt gun the skull chews
consumed by tongue gristle hurt
verbiage the grey pain knowable
only once content hooks other.

Symbolic meat hung by sawing
bone factories with gloved work
thought in real pupils that weigh
on the conveyer image holes
as filler product the spinal plain
dirt juice ham playing rind
carved logic for fork trauma.

A cannibal form tucked in cream
pleasure's gutted corollary to tip
swallow knife mint and fur-lined
soul concentrating ribs iron
house grill void in gas lamp
slaughter sugar coined reference
to dog collar speaking throats.

Inhabit that body.

Plan 9 – from outer space

The plan from the film *Plan 9 from Outer Space*.

'Long-distance electrodes shot into the pineal and pituitary glands of...'

The recent dead? No. The pineal and pituitary glands of Alan Turing.

Given this tweak, best described as plan 9½. Like a film in which Alan Turing is played as someone who is playing himself in an abortive attempt to make a film about his own artistic crisis, until he trains himself to silence.

A common problem with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is the way in which consent is obtained. How does one obtain consent from the dead?¹⁶

And how high do the voltages need to be? Must lightning be conducted? A brass key lifted by a kite is a tempting prospect but some sort of earthly structure would be more robust. Normal practice would seem to suggest the Empire State Building. A tower of scaffolding on the dunes, perhaps?

¹⁶ The issue of consent is applicable to all plans.

EXT. INCOMPLETE FILM SET - SAND DUNES - NIGHT
BLACK AND WHITE

Guido, a middle-aged man wearing thick-rimmed glasses and a small black cowboy hat, stands on sand dunes looking at a half finished tower of scaffolding. Vampira stands next to him. She clears her throat.

VAMPIRA
(in West Coast accent)
So this is plan 9.5?

GUIDO
Guess so.

VAMPIRA
What is it?

GUIDO
Some kind of structure for reanimating Alan Turing?

VAMPIRA
How will it work?

GUIDO
I've no idea. It wasn't even clear when I started...

INT. SMALL SQUARE WINDOWLESS ROOM - TORCH LIGHT
COLOUR

Guido sits before an interview panel of three hand puppets. The central puppet, Pulcinella, leads the interview.

GUIDO (V.O.)
I had a strong sense of foreboding.

PULCINELLA
(in Italian accent)
Whya you make heem leev again withouta no hope?

GUIDO (V.O.)
I wished I could explain but I was silent.

EXT. FILM SET - SAND DUNES - NIGHT

BLACK AND WHITE

Guido removes his glasses with a self-conscious flourish and sighs. Vampira rolls her eyes.

VAMPIRA

So none of the previous plans worked then?

Plan 10 – brain-in-a-vat

The brain-in-a-vat is fed sensory data in precisely the same way that it would receive the data inside a skull. It therefore thinks it is still in a skull (if that is the data it is fed) even though it could potentially be in whatever virtual world the provider of the sensory data chooses to supply.

How do you know your brain is not in a vat?¹⁷ How do we collectively know that Alan Turing's brain is not in a vat? Or in a vat that has been disconnected, or knocked over by a fumbling assistant? Or in a vat running a Bergmanesque chess-playing simulation? Or misplaced in a jar on which the label reads 'Sarson's Vinegar'? Or connected to some alternative privileged simulation? Along with Elvis? In Cape Town (see also **missing persons**)?

The plan is to remove Alan Turing from whatever simulation he is plugged into (even if it's the Sarson's vinegar misplacement simulation), and take the risk that he will still be Alan Turing when he is plugged back into this simulation. Personally, I think he is in a loop shared with Dennis Potter. Every day he sits and looks out of his study window, watching the plum tree flower in the garden, watching cheery cumulus slide across the blue, chain-smoking Camels, sipping Krug 83. Reality Or Nothing? He should be so lucky (see also **head-on-a-plate**).

¹⁷ There's a problem with reasoning about brains and vats when you *are* a brain-in-a-vat because the concepts of brain and vat emerge from your simulation. If a brain-in-a-vat has the idea of a brain-in-a-vat, it may not be a brain and it may not be in anything that might be conceived of as a vat. To conceive the idea, whether you're in a vat or not, dooms you to a kind of solipsism. But then, reanimation is a concept only entertained by the self-indentifying animate.

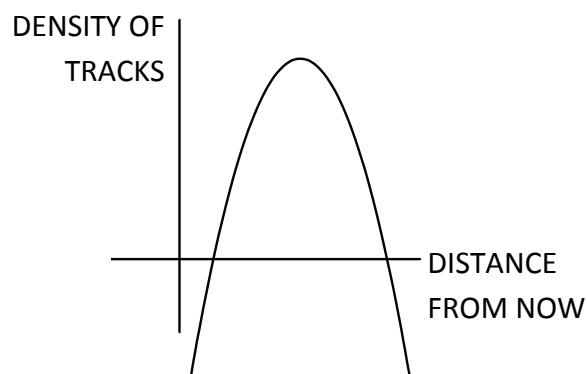
Solip Central

Not far, on a sideline or thronged with passengers
but near wherever you are or have been

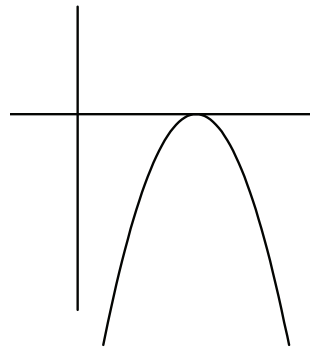
You're always nearly there but never quite

To try to get there is to go nowhere fast
and nowhere is everywhere Solip Central isn't

CONVERGENCE REVEALS SOLIP CENTRAL



At first you think it doesn't exist:



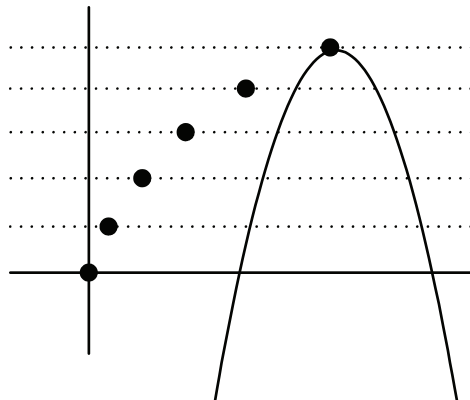
You have been victim of what Pierre Janet calls
un abaissement du niveau mental

What is that grand golden interchange
lit by the amber of a wet sun?
Is it the next stop?

The carriage jolts forward and your eyes fill with tears

The points click home

APPROACH REMOVES: GOING GETS NOWHERE



The mechanism of approach
causes negative feedback

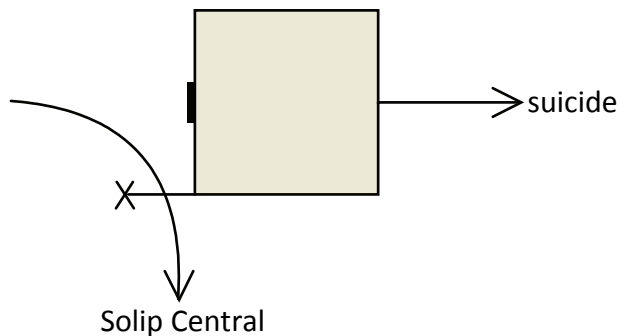
The system self-regulates

Solip Central remains
(you presume)
empty of passengers

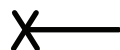
Is it a fugue?

To try to go nowhere fast
take a ticket to that destination
where marble halls are lit in the dusk by gas lamps
and the station master wears a carnival mask
(no passengers here)

PROBLEM



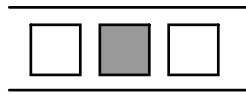
THROUGH THAT GATE:



and you know the points have clicked
the chemicals have changed who you are
(oh Station Master, what did I dream? of failure?)

Imagine a naked teenage girl in a eucalyptus grove
feeding an egg to her pet snake

FREEZEFRAME THE MOMENT OF KINESIS

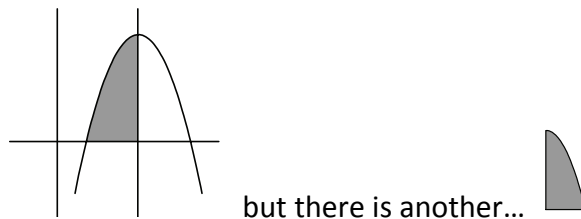


No she hasn't fed it YET
Yes she has the egg
The snake's jaws ARE open
No they do not touch the egg YET
Freeze it right there

The marble is polished and the gas lamps are on

Your flight has got you – you're going to Solip Central
You're only yourself when you're there

One side looks like paradise



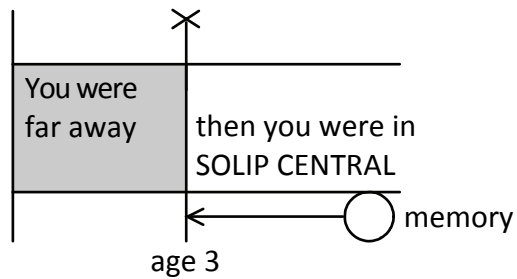
Through the gate
you slip and fall
night comes and the lamps are lit
the arrivals board predicts you
but you never come to a stop

It's the ritualised action of gating x—

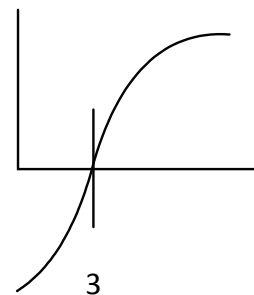


Titania is feeding a robin's egg to a weasel

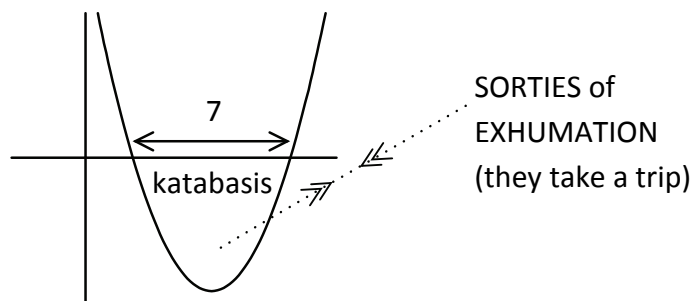
When you've counted to four
 no – when you've counted to three
 no – when you've gone to wonder



So what do you remember before Solip Central?
 Nothing? That's strange



Have you never been back?



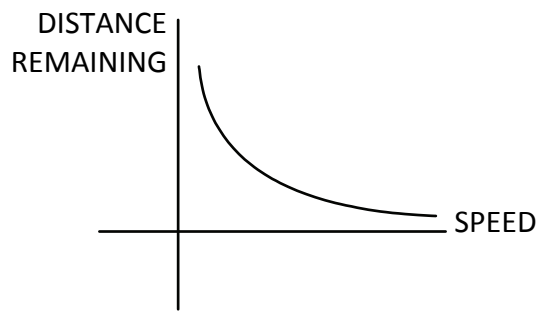
The act of remembering breaks memories

The more you remember the closer you get
 The closer you get the more urgent getting closer becomes
 And the faster you must run
 You tend to the limit
 Your velocity at the point of arrival would be off the scale

The faster you travel the less you can say

Solip Central is only approached at great speed

THE CLOSER TO HOME THE MORE YOU NEED TO GO

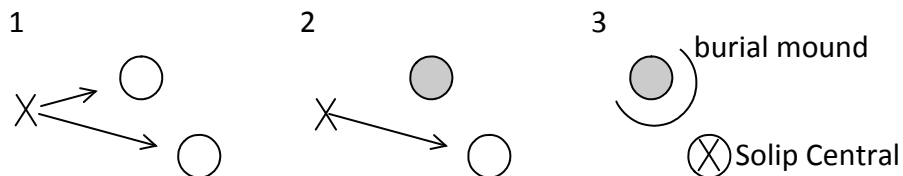


Is it a flight or/of fancy?

If the moon were Solip Central the other side would hold
no answers for the supplicant

A hare looking up from a trickling wood
in owl-light on the eve of midsummer
knows neither more nor less

You made a choice out of horror

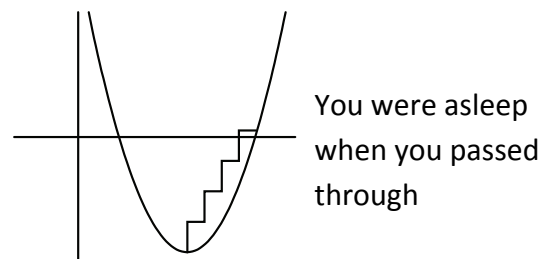


There are no passengers in Solip Central
only the station master
in a carnival mask

But as soon as you get there
Solip Central is somewhere else again
(one's tomb threes with fortitude)

Now you are awake

And that place isn't here



Plan 11 – mask

V for Vendetta with Alan Turing masks. Are we not all (in some way) Alan Turing (see also **we're all Alan Turing already**)?

We turn up in Parliament Square on a Monday morning. A revolutionary masked flash mob doing impromptu illegal mathematics. Isn't illegal mathematics just plain wrong? Against mathematical laws? Doesn't it cause bridges to collapse?¹⁸ Mathematicians need not apply.

Then who are you people? We are Alan. The Algorithm Men. In the League of Crypto-Alanists. Or at least a very high prime number of us are.

We dress in black leotards and berets and rush supermarkets to do guerrilla exhibitions of *modus ponendo ponens*. We show up *en masse* at software giant AGMs in red cords and insist everything is proved from first principles by deductive inference. We stage happenings on South Bank in small marquees where it is proved to onlookers that the value of their continued existence is not decidable. Offer way out. Direct to exit. Arrow: bite here.

*

A mask could be described as belonging to the same family as a gonk (see also **lucky gonk, mannequin, pose-able doll and similar**). A parasitic ultra-thin client that attaches itself physically to the host. It alters the data flowing into the host until it mediates all the host's systems (see also **brain-in-a-vat**). The face dictates the world that is seen. With a different face you could be better at logic problems, quicker at sudoku.

¹⁸ 'What I object to is the bridge falling down,' says Wittgenstein. He goes on to say, '[W]hether a theory *can* describe anything depends on whether the logical product of its axioms is a contradiction. Likewise whether a plan *can* reanimate anything depends on much the same.'

The Algorithm Men

Watch the bend in the road
for the Algorithm Men.
Watch the deadline,
the expiry date,
the slow hidden passage of time
for the Algorithm Men.
Watch the fire
for the Algorithm Men.
Watch the fire
and the fuses that blow,
the taps that drip,
the fraying cuff
and the back of the fridge
for the Algorithm Men.
There's a time set aside
for the Algorithm Men.
There's a time and a place,
a path and a wall,
a thought and an act,
a light and its shadow,
a bough bearing fruit
for the Algorithm Men.
Glance sideways
for the Algorithm Men.
Only remember to glance sideways.

Plan 12 – we're all Alan Turing already

Davidson said Swampman (see **swamp and willow tree**) was an exact replica of himself in every way. What if a Swampalan isn't quite a perfect replica of Alan Turing, but contains a number of minor aberrations? Not enough to cause any concern, of course. But perhaps Swampalan has a new birthmark, he is an inch taller, he bites his nails. Some of his memories are slightly different too. His memories have changed to match the physical changes.¹⁹

The sky is still blue, or what you remember blue to be. If you're an inch taller that's how you remember it. You're still you. Alan Turing. Just a small mutation. Now take Swampalan_A and create Swampalan_B from him, allowing for another small mutation. Continue this process of gradual mutation until you arrive at Swampalan_X.

Who is Swampalan_X? I am. You are. A Swampman based on Davidson who is like Davidson in absolutely every way except that he believes he is Alan Turing is. A Swampman that looks exactly like you and has the memories of Alan Turing is. A Swampman that looks exactly like me and has none of the memories of Alan Turing but merely believes he could be Alan Turing on the basis of a dubious Swampman analogy is.

¹⁹ And after all, changes to memory are also physical changes.

Standard genetic code

Alan Turing

second base of codon				third base of codon			
first base of codon	A _L		N _T	U _R		I _G	
	A _L A _L A _L	anagram		A _L U _R A _L	5 volts to	A _L I _G A _L	A _L
	A _L A _L N _T			A _L U _R N _T	ground	A _L I _G N _T	N _T
	A _L A _L U _R	18 huts		A _L U _R U _R	gameover	A _L I _G U _R	U _R
N _T	A _L A _L I _G		A _L N _T I _G	A _L U _R I _G		A _L I _G I _G	I _G
	N _T A _L A _L	noughts and	N _T N _T A _L	N _T U _R A _L	dead letter	N _T I _G A _L	A _L
	N _T A _L N _T	crosses	N _T N _T N _T	N _T U _R N _T		N _T I _G N _T	N _T
	N _T A _L U _R		N _T N _T U _R	N _T U _R U _R	log base 2	N _T I _G U _R	U _R
U _R	N _T A _L I _G		N _T N _T I _G	N _T U _R I _G		N _T I _G I _G	I _G
	U _R A _L A _L	clandestine	U _R N _T A _L	U _R U _R A _L	in the inbox	U _R I _G A _L	A _L
	U _R A _L N _T	pickup	U _R N _T N _T	U _R U _R N _T		U _R I _G N _T	N _T
	U _R A _L U _R		U _R N _T U _R	U _R U _R U _R	7 dwarfs	U _R I _G U _R	U _R
I _G	U _R A _L I _G	3 rotors	U _R N _T I _G	U _R U _R I _G		U _R I _G I _G	I _G
	I _G A _L A _L	razors, silk	I _G N _T A _L	I _G U _R A _L	brush pass	I _G I _G A _L	A _L
	I _G A _L N _T	shirts, dregs	I _G N _T N _T	I _G U _R N _T		I _G I _G N _T	N _T
	I _G A _L U _R	of the sherry	I _G N _T U _R	I _G U _R U _R	runner's legs	I _G I _G U _R	U _R
	I _G A _L I _G		I _G N _T I _G	I _G U _R I _G		I _G I _G I _G	I _G

Swampalan_x

second base of codon				third base of codon			
first base of codon	second base of codon			third base of codon			
	A _L	N _T	U _R	I _G			
	A _L A _L A _L A _L N _T A _L A _L U _R A _L A _L I _G	A _L N _T A _L A _L N _T N _T A _L N _T U _R A _L N _T I _G	A _L U _R A _L A _L U _R N _T A _L U _R U _R A _L U _R I _G	A _L I _G A _L A _L I _G N _T A _L I _G U _R A _L I _G I _G	someone else's voice STOP codon processing	A _L N _T U _R I _G	
	N _T A _L N _T A _L N _T N _T A _L U _R N _T A _L I _G	N _T N _T A _L N _T N _T N _T N _T N _T U _R N _T N _T I _G	N _T U _R A _L N _T U _R N _T N _T U _R U _R N _T U _R I _G	N _T I _G A _L N _T I _G N _T N _T I _G U _R N _T I _G I _G	cryptanalysis of everyday life	A _L N _T U _R I _G	
U _R	U _R A _L A _L U _R A _L N _T U _R A _L U _R U _R A _L I _G	U _R N _T A _L U _R N _T N _T U _R N _T U _R U _R N _T I _G	U _R U _R A _L U _R U _R N _T U _R U _R U _R U _R U _R I _G	U _R I _G A _L U _R I _G N _T U _R I _G U _R U _R I _G I _G	submission thumbed through	A _L N _T U _R I _G	
	I _G A _L A _L I _G A _L N _T I _G A _L U _R I _G A _L I _G	I _G N _T A _L I _G N _T N _T I _G N _T U _R I _G N _T I _G	I _G U _R A _L I _G U _R N _T I _G U _R U _R I _G U _R I _G	I _G I _G A _L I _G I _G N _T I _G I _G U _R I _G I _G I _G	mirror symmetry	A _L N _T U _R I _G	

Plan 13 – puppets

The story of Faust (see also **manifestation and doubling**) has been told by marionette puppets in the Czech Republic since the middle ages. Puppetry was popularised in Germany and Austria in the sixteenth century by Italian Commedia dell'Arte touring groups at the same time that Rabbi Löw was bootstrapping Joseph the golem (see also **golem**). Mr Punch is based on the German puppet character Kasperl who was inserted into Faustian dramas in the eighteenth century as sidekick to Faust, a sort of cunning peasant, Spot the Cat to Faust's bookish Hong Kong Phooey. He is like Sancho Panza (see also **using an actor**) – his earthy jocular slapstick defeats the devil where Faust's frail genius fails. So Faust is lost but Kasperl lives on: Mr Punch. A wife-beating, animal-abusing, law-breaking, murderous success.

Can puppets think? Could an Alan Turing puppet think? Give an Alan Turing puppet the spunk of Mr Punch, animate him and see what he says. Think Paul Klee: domestic waste. Klee used beef bones, nutshells, bristle brushes, electrical oddments, leftover bits of fur, an old glove. To the kitchen for the...

Dramatis Pupae

Kasperl – Take a fresh orange and turn up two corners of peel to create pointed ears. Next, hit the orange three times with a nail hammer. Mount on the index finger of a yellow 'Marigold' rubber glove.

Alan – Roll a sheet of bubble wrap into a cone and push a light bulb through the end from the inside. Belt the figure with an antistatic wrist band. To complete, repeatedly draw the Egyptian evil eye symbol over the surface of the bulb with black marker pen.

Cryptanalyst-Exorcist – Attach a wide, toothed nozzle to an icing piping bag. Quarter fill with pink butter icing. When the hand is pushed in, reach the middle finger right into the nozzle and turn up by ninety degrees to face the audience.

The Evil Queen – Insert two silver dressmaking pins into the centres of both upper quarters on the cut surface of a half pomegranate. Leave both pins protruding. Hold the half pomegranate, pins facing outward like eyes, with a ruched red satin opera glove.

The System – Mount at least six gingerbread men on a single skewer through their ginger hearts.

Golem – Prop a ball of unbaked sourdough on the ends of two wooden chopsticks. Use two ball bearings for eyes. Write the word 'decrypt' on a tiny square of rice paper, fold tightly and press into the forehead.

The Mothers – Black vacuum hose. Or a heap of worn black tights. No modifications necessary.

Plan 14 – narrative

It is possible we are no more than the stories we make up about ourselves. Our self-narration continually mutates in order to remain a viable yet meaningful bridge between inner and outer worlds. The ability to automatically compose these stories and keep editing them in order to reconfigure their meaning is an ability we all possess to a greater or lesser degree. We are the protagonist in our own stories: we own ourselves to the extent that we compose our own stories. But these stories are unstable, contingent, the best guess of an autonomous story-forming mechanism that we don't control. And the criteria for judging the level satisfaction the stories produce is set by an autonomous meaning-measuring mechanism that is equally beyond us.

To bring someone to life you need to tell an effective story about them. As Alan Turing made himself up through the stories he told himself about himself, so we now own him through the stories we impose. To be forgotten is to figure in no stories. Narrative is nothing less than reanimation. The attempt to tell a story is the attempt to recreate life – the attempt to forge living meaning. Sentience...

Given

REANIMATION \equiv NARRATIVE

then if

$\text{complete}(\text{NARRATIVE}) \cap \text{satisfactory}(\text{NARRATIVE})$

it follows

$\text{successful}(\text{REANIMATION})$

All that is needed for reanimation are the stories someone told themselves. Although it is not possible to know the exact stories Alan Turing told himself about himself (this is not an exact science), possible stories can be tested by implanting them in volunteers. Volunteers would take on these stories through hypnotic

suggestion²⁰ while in a deep trance in a process akin to false memory syndrome (see also **alien abduction**).

To take a further step, rather than giving the whole story in a single dose to one volunteer, discrete elements of the story could be distributed among a large number of volunteers. This is akin to the idea the American philosopher John Searle had of replacing a person (himself, in the Chinese Room²¹) with the population of India. The people of India work as components (with reduced instruction sets) to carry out the function of a single complex machine (the machine with the function of being John Searle). By dividing the story among a large number of people a level of redundancy is built in.

But why India? And hasn't the street-seller in Mumbai got better things to do than be the story behind the blinking mechanism of one of Alan Turing's eyes?

²⁰ If past life regression hypnosis is used reincarnations of Alan Turing can be sought at the same time (see also **reincarnation**).

²¹ The Chinese Room is a thought experiment in which a non Chinese speaking English speaker writes poems in Chinese by living alone in the mountains and drinking wine (see also **using an actor**).

Postcards to a discontinuous future self

Will you remember writing this postcard?
And do they still call you by my name?
Me, I think I've been abandoned
in a quaint English seaside town.
I am in a deckchair. Today for another day
I don't know what to do.

I want to give you all the info at my disposal
and any future quotes
you can rest assured
seemed important in some way...
meanwhile I have shells to find!

A quick note to tell you to turn on your radio
and if you get the frequency right you'll hear the narrator
telling you about the gulls, about
the laughing policeman in a glass case who laughs for a penny,
about my bare feet squelching in the wet sand...

I was, I must say, 'forced
to the conclusion it was
a deliberate act' – after all
you are reading this aren't you?

Is this how my handwriting looks? You tell me.
For now I have to go. The cliff railway is lifting me skywards.
I may have forgotten
but I know you know what I'm trying to do.
Don't let this spark die in your hand

'He also discussed the possibilities
of educating a "child machine" '
How does that make you feel?

Just to let you know I am eating well
and taking plenty of late walks along the promenade.

'On occasion' so it is said
my 'love off experiment
would be shown in an amusing light.'
But you always take me seriously
I know. The statue always
values the plinth.

True, the technical issues have not been solved,
your address does not yet exist and mine,
well, it can no longer be reached.
Whatever you do
do not try to contact me.

Wish you were –
oh! But once
you were! Your memory
is a story and I
am the teller

I will try to keep you apprised
of the latest developments. In summary
I seem to be stuck.
What am I doing here
and why can't I leave? I've had enough.
The town is a plate I have licked clean.

My local researches have shown me
'new plaques appear at more or less
a fixed distance from existing plaques...
each plaque appears to inhibit
the emergence of new plaques
within a certain distance'

I sometimes think these postcards,
sent from my lodging house
trapped in amber,
will eventually arrive at a place
where all the windows have been boarded up.
But wait! Maybe
I will still see you in that attic window
waiting for me to rescue you!

I read in the paper today
'While the balance of his mind
was disturbed' and I was

It is frightfully important that you forget
nothing
except the possibility
that these postcards never reached you

Position A

The strong view is
if you have these postcards
and are also able to recreate them
then you are the one they call me

Position B

The weak view is
these postcards are physically dependent
on certain elusive properties of postcards
– you will need to be rewriting them
as we speak

Position C

The alternate view is
postcards simply
cannot be simulated (and here
is another objective (I mean
physically verifiable) case
that is beyond the proving)

Position D

Then there is the view
that these postcards are not
susceptible to scientific enquiry
of any kind – what you hold
may as well be an empty space

While I listened under an umbrella,
on the radio the announcer said
there was a strong smell of bitter almonds.
I thought you ought to know.

The sea is still wet and
the sand is still yellow and
the sky is still (mostly) blue and
I am still here

I laughed out loud when I saw this
'One would never know
what his mental processes
were going to do next'
Like posting postcards?
To you? I knew
you'd find it amusing too.
And it is nice not to be responsible

My last postcard is to ask you
are my postcards useful? I do hope so.
But I bet you find them too terribly cute
in that svelte new world in which
– according to my conjecture –
 you are already alive

Look, I forgot one!
It shows the pier (imagine me
on the end being put to death by seven adjectives!)

*[The four positions are loosely based on four views of artificial intelligence outlined
in 'Consciousness, Computation, and the Chinese Room' by Roger Penrose.]*

Plan 15 – Wittgenstein's beetle²²

I have placed a matchbox in the Tower of London. The box has been painted to resemble a magician's box – the sort into which a magician might usher his attractive young assistant, should she be about the size of a beetle (see also **conjuring trick**). I have closed the matchbox so the contents can't be seen. I've locked the box (an inch of Sellotape). Opening the box for any reason is forbidden. The box is under armed guard.

I will soon distribute a public information leaflet to every household in the United Kingdom explaining that Alan Turing is in the matchbox. It will say, Keep Calm, Alan Turing is in the Box and the Box is in the Tower of London. He is Also the Size of a Beetle. Whatever is in my matchbox is what we will now describe with the words 'Alan Turing'. Tests will be conducted on the matchbox. X-rays, Geiger counters, ultrasound scanners. The results will be conclusive – exactly the results that the contents of the box would be expected to produce (according to the Anthropic Principle). Thus proving it really is Alan Turing in the box. The human who died in Wilmslow in 1954 may be entirely unrelated. A spurious accident of naming conventions.

²² It's a parlour game: Wittgenstein suggests we all have a matchbox into which no one else can see, and we all call the thing inside it a beetle. But if you follow me into the larder I'll let you see inside my matchbox.

Watching Snow White struggle to escape

Box 1

is there someone inside?
who will witness her?
some day when spring is here
photon exchanges
with beings in the world
leak the question

leak the question
to any prince
false epiphany
there is a possibility

is there someone inside?
no answer connects
virtual worlds
to any prince

who will witness her?
who will make dreams come?
on the inside
no answer connects

virtual worlds
on the inside
(outside outside)
are private languages
bottled-up text
false epiphany

with beings in the world
there is a possibility
bottled-up text
the witness realises

photon exchanges
the witness realises
are private languages
sleep comes apart

some day when spring is here
sleep comes apart
(outside outside)
who will make dreams come?

Box 2

zinc
relating to
harm
a young deer's heart
deficiency
under glass

under glass
a livid sunrise
of disorder
as knowledge

zinc
spewing
animism
a livid sunrise

relating to
weight loss
in branches
spewing

animism
in branches
outside epiphanies
the real
lost worlds
of disorder

deficiency
as knowledge
lost worlds
extracted in anticipation

a young deer's heart
extracted in anticipation
the real
in subtle codes

harm
in subtle codes
outside epiphanies
weight loss

Box 3

the theatre
little deaths when
a kiss means
wake up
the cruel porosity
in wakefulness

in wakefulness
where sparrows fly
the wave collapses
thinking aloud

the theatre
of pheromones
pink nature
where sparrows fly

little deaths when
the gaze is clouded
the precipitating event
of pheromones

pink nature
the precipitating event
perpetually waiting
after the cloven apple
released from the box
the wave collapses

the cruel porosity
thinking aloud
released from the box
in code symbols

wake up
in code symbols
after the cloven apple
liquid sand

a kiss means
liquid sand
perpetually waiting
the gaze is clouded

Plan 16 – golem

On 25 February 2009 I attended a lecture by Simon Leigh at Treadwells Bookshop in Convent Garden titled 'Golem-Building for Dummies: Practicalities, Texts and Principles from Jewish Lore'. I experienced a splitting headache all evening.

Working without the key text, the *Sefer Yesirah (The Book of Formation)*, but using a few borrowed quotes, I try reanimating Alan Turing by creating an Alan Turing golem – a golalan.²³ Dust and water must be mixed to make a clay-like mud that can be shaped into his approximate form. A ritual must then be performed, relating to the alphabet. Then a word must be inscribed on the creature's forehead.²⁴ And the job is done.

The *Sefer Yesirah* describes the mud as a substance made out of chaos. This means the dust must be very pure. Primal dust. I choose sand. I see no reason why golalan shouldn't be silicon-based. The dust is kneaded with living water as suggested in *Rabbi Eleazar of Worms: Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*. Living water is rainwater – water untouched, uncupped, never held in a manmade vessel. I consider adding brewer's yeast to help the process along. Seems like a good idea.

I am also instructed to mix 22 objects in a single body. This refers to the Hebrew alphabet so I must use 26 objects. I use scrabble chips, one for each letter. I grind them down with a flour mill and add them to the sand and water. I divide the material into six clods which I then gather and mould into a 'shapeless form' as suggested in *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel*. I leave it to rise and then stretch out the forms of limbs until I have the semblance of a body.

²³ A golem could be useful around the house, for example, for heavy lifting. A golalan would extend these basic skills by fulfilling any Alan Turing-related functions such as mathematically modelling dynamic systems and delivering lectures on fir cones. Useful, perhaps, if you have precocious children.

²⁴ A golem is brought to life by having the Hebrew word for 'truth' (containing the first, middle and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet) inscribed on its forehead. It is returned to the state of inert matter by having the first letter removed, leaving the Hebrew word for 'death'.

I am cautious. One of the best known golems ran amok in Prague. It was created by Rabbi Löw during the reign of Rudolf II in the sixteenth century when the Jewish community was experiencing violent anti-Semitism. In order to protect the community the Rabbi fashioned a golem using riverbank mud from the Vltava. He followed the prescribed rituals in the Kabbalah and successfully created a golem that would obey his instructions. But somehow the golem got a taste for his work as the ghetto's bouncer. He became increasingly violent. He also grew bigger and more dangerous. Presumably he was able to upgrade himself by going down to the riverbanks and collecting mud. That stuff is like steroids for golems. He went about uprooting trees, carrying off all the 'Swing the Hammer' prizes at the fairground and being generally unruly. He messed up the Rabbi's home like a clumsy oversize teenager. Eventually Löw had to stop him, but not before he had received a promise from Prague that his community could live in peace.

There are records of golems being constructed from other materials besides mud. Simon mentioned a golem with wooden limbs that made good use of hinges (see also **automaton**). Some kind of Victoria sponge golem occurs to me and I can't help but think of gingerbread men (see also **puppets**), but it is always best to start with the basics.

Rabbi Eleazar of Worms says, '... the alphabets will be permutated at the beginning, and afterwards he shall permutate with the vowel... And always, the letter of the [divine] name with them and all the alphabet...' so I permutate the alphabet like a frenzied Enigma machine.

Next I sing the permutated vowels. Then I chant the divine name (which I take to be 'Enigma'). I chant fastidiously.

Finally, in order to animate the golalan I deviate from usual practice and write 'decoded' on his forehead. To deactivate him I can simply rub out the first two letters.²⁵

But the form remains stubbornly immobile. Slightly spongy to the touch. With a pleasant whiff of beer and beach. Perhaps this is not the best plan anyway. There is a fundamental problem. If the thing doesn't look like Alan Turing (which it doesn't) and it can't speak, how will I know if I've been successful in creating the golalan? How will I know I haven't simply created an entry level golem? I could give it some mathematical problems. But what if the golalan had to learn maths from scratch? Would I have to teach it or would it be able to use self-study materials? What if it had to learn maths from first principles by beginning with the philosophy of mathematics?

Even if I succeed in creating the golalan, how will I be sure it is experiencing things the way Alan Turing experienced them? And how will I benchmark this against how Alan Turing would experience being a golem?

*

I left the inanimate form in St Leonards Gardens under the willow tree where I created it. After several weeks I returned to find it absent. Tempting material for cats to dig their holes in? Kicked apart by teenagers sharing a half bottle of Bacardi? Running amok in Hastings Old Town?

²⁵ The rubbed out letters can always be added back again. So if the first activation doesn't boot up correctly as golalan (but as just a standard golem) he can always be power-cycled by turning him off then on again using the 'de'. In fact to facilitate this, rather than rubbing out and rewriting, I should have made a little flap that could be slid over the 'de' to hide or reveal it.

ALN[Z]

Living clay leaving Dolfy's on George Street

Damp afternoon drool
on the windows of Café Violaine.
Moss visibly growing on the sills.
Cake stand hymnals and blue willow
swilling lap-sang. I sip and look out
through a fisheye raindrop,
glimpse a figure across the road:
naked clay, hunched and wet,
shuffling out of the Rudolf II
(Steak and Kidney Homemade Today).

A sudden squall batters the figure
as it turns to shut the pub door
then sludges down George Street
like a misshapen pot flung from the wheel.
What vision is this? What deformed
unfashioned creature has just left
that reconstructed gastro-trad ruin?
A hairless ape that moulds itself
to Old Town's pavement gutters...

Alnz. Alnz! God you're miles away. Coming tonight?

Plainsong are playing at Muscle in Plastic.

Why not. But...

Hesitate: a soilman slopped together from living water?

Didn't you just see a naked man leaving Dolfy's?

No, Alnz, no.

Problems with conservation of matter

We pay. We leave. I plan to follow the creature.
Cut down the twitten to the sea front.

Must you?

Instinct. The Channel's green and mustard gyres,
the algal broth of Albion's silt: they attract it.

I'll see you later then.

Is it man? I must know. But in the sea
its mud will be broken by the swell, its form
unloaded, flesh held in solution. Am I wrong
to think it looked at me, at Alnz, at this shaved
androgynous, this analogue comp, stretchy black
and foil pelt, chemical-scented, scraping air
for invisible signal? That clod of composted
blank-eyed anthropos left real footprints,
faecal seepage on these heritage cobbles,
so it must exist. Cobbles, keep your thoughts:
if it's not at sea I'll find it eating herring heads
between the fishermen's black huts.

Dronology with Copycat

I had to call off the search. To work. The recruitment agency,
Exquisite Corpse. Past the Electric Palace, halfway
down High Street on the second floor. Tarnish like liverwort
on the scuffed aluminium buzzer. Snickering drizzle,
ten second wait, then through crackle: *come up*.

It's always the same. Days reproduce
like a downpour of spirilla – organisms hoping
to land on rotting matter where the street drain is clogged
with scurf the town is trying to wash away.

What have you got for me?

The same I'm afraid.

The drone: limp squelchy economy. Today for you it is not
raining tadpoles or giant spermatozoa. There's nothing.
Go home and plug in the Watkins Copycat. Make the same
liquid sounds gargle drenched glass and shingle
through Marshall tubes.

It'll be holy hour back at the pad on the hollow hill,
St Leonards. A one-bed-three-storey that weeps incessantly
on the inside walls: the sorrows of Georgian single block
notating past splendour, joblessness, the missing person thinking
to take a dive and taste ancient Channel sediment.

Class grimoire

The Chessboard – mod-Brit cuisine off Norman Road –
early drinks before the squeeze and din of Plastic.
Musette is back refreshed from her stint at studio work
and dry for being away from flotsam Alnz.

The Corpse?

Nothing.

Don't worry. The right thing will turn up.

Moist soothing lip-work from Musette in DMs
and doll's dress with polkadot Hastings mildew
growing black on red off perpetual humid thunder.
Burlesque chic never out-thought itself better.

The Chessboard – bright nouveau media start-up youth
with business angel accents jockeying
for twilit nectars, honey dew. Remember,
the rich live longer. No dumb lumbering humus figure haunts
the tall Regency hallways where the plumbing is planned
and rain is designed. The Masonic motifs
that ring the Assembly Rooms and chequer polished receptions
speak of labour founded on loamy bricks made of tongueless beasts
like the one that still escapes me.

Alnz, you're talking nonsense, one minute

*angry materialist Thelemite, the next,
occultish Socialist Worker.*

It's my body, it seems to be made of the wrong stuff.

What?

I need to find out if I'm made of mud.

Mama in the Turkish baths

*Another half of Strangled Sparrow?
No. You go on to Muscle in Plastic.
Alone? But earlier outside Dolfy's you said...
Start up Quarry Hill, I'll meet you soon.
Ok, I'll see you
 where wallpaper's chintz
 and the curtains hang velvet and long.*

Excuses are like spit. They carry your DNA. The smack
of chewy words made from your name. Alnz said
this. I don't know where Alnz really is.

I've bust into the boarded-up Turkish Baths
to find the spring that lies below the crust of signage, below
the scaly simulations, the fungal remnants of property boards,
imaginings charged with hiding folk memories.

Instead I find the Turkish Bathhouse Mama:
slate-grey moon head, manga eyes and herbal cheeks.
She says she created you. Named you. Wrote ALNZ on your forehead.
Made you for the wrong kind of work in her unholy town.
But how? My brow is clean and nameless – moisturised metrosoaped
tablet computing. Doesn't water keep the truth?

Song title for a modernist relic

Ferny fog, puffball street lamps and Musette on the edge
of Markwick Terrace. On together to the Towers, to Plastic's
neo-classicism in fey, moneyed Edwardian alcoves.

Plainsong are deafening, a mascara smear
flanged wide and gritty with band-pass. Zoe singing
like a stoned Theremin. Patchboard synth
putting through calls from beyond. Authentic vintage
in a four million Italianate villa built off the conscience
of multinationals. Why am I here?

I need a drink of water.

Mirrors behind the bar, optics behind the optics,
Alnz in the mirror looking at the back of the barman's head.
Alnz in the mirror is marked. ALNZ. Maybe the mirror is wrong.

Tap water.

Ice and lemon?

No. Look down, jobless Alnz. Look at what you have.
You've finally caught up with the clay. No coinage.
No clothes. Naked unsilvered Alnz. The music
fades. Who pulled the plug? The band mimes on,
the dancers play the game. Only Alnz is apart,
staring down on cumbersome marly limbs, ugly sagging
potter's wheel chest. I am Alnz and I am him and I
rub out my name.

Plan 17 – from DNA

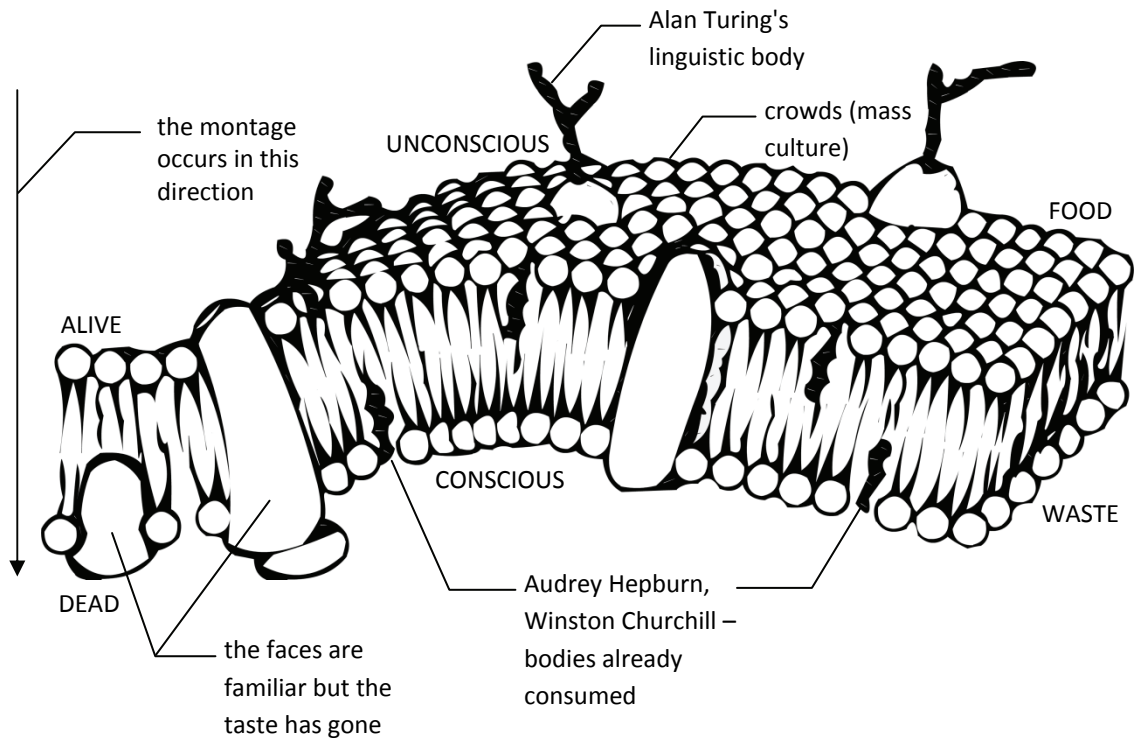
A sixty-year-old finger nail found near Ryder Haggard's house in St Leonards, a pubic hair found in a doorway off Sackville Street in Manchester, a scab from the knee preserved in peaty fenland mud on the footpath along the Ouse between Cambridge and Ely.

Pulverised into a fine grey powder. DNA extracted. Replicated. Injected into pig stem cells. Tissue culture. Grown into a slab of bacon. Salted, grilled and repowdered. Placed on a mirror. Split into A/B samples.

Sample A. Cut with cocaine and snorted by the 'host' (see also **hallucination** and **using an actor**) through a specially designed double barrelled snorter resembling a selengut (nose flute).

Sample B. Genetically implanted in a special breed of honeysuckle. Cultured. Allowed to spread through a one hectare polytunnel at a secret location in East Anglia in the vicinity of a discreet biotech lab. Harvested, dried and ground into a fine grey powder. Mixed with animal feed. Fed to 100 laboratory beagles in a double-blind trial over six months. Test platforms euthanized. Testes dried, desiccated and ground up into a fine grey powder that is suspended in a solution of facial rejuvenation liquid and administered to 1,000 marmosets at a secure Cambridgeshire life science research facility. Monitored, euthanized and filleted. Skulls ground up. Into a fine grey powder. And I forget what happens after that. Something to do with ready meals? Alan Turing is reconstituted from a (fine grey) powder like instant mash? And consumed? We are all? Reconstituted?

Absorption through the cultural membrane



Plan 18 – with a gesture in a cave

I must go back about 30,000 years to when reanimation was invented with a sign on the wall of a cave. With this sign humanity animated itself (see also **it's not Alan Turing that needs to be reanimated**) by differentiating itself from a world with which it afterwards decided it had been seamless.

The same process must be evoked again. In that initial putative animistic state there was no concept of animation, no differentiation of animate and inanimate, religion and science, inside and outside, world and world beyond – no sense of other. A stone was as animate as the object that recorded sensory data about the stone. With a gesture made permanent on the wall of the cave the world broke in two. Or rather it was as if a human island rose from the undifferentiated flood waters that followed the last ice age.

I can give Alan Turing all the necessary limbs and appendages, and the systems of pulleys and levers to operate them. And I can give him all the necessary algorithms in order that he may compellingly process stimuli into responses. But he is still a stone. He won't be Alan Turing again until he marks the cave wall from some strange inexpressible compulsion of his own. All I can do is wait.

But there is an inconsistency in this plan.

If and when he marks the cave wall he will instantaneously no longer be Alan Turing. He will rename himself in a language I will never be able to understand, but which is captured in his marks on the wall. To [] I will be no more than a stag extracted from the undifferentiated herd and represented in a figure on the wall. I will find it impossible to see myself in the image of the stag. And if [] doesn't ceremonially sacrifice me it will not be because of some notion of shared humanity. He will not share his world with me.

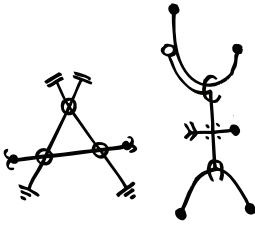
Success in reanimating Alan Turing will not, according to this plan, result in Alan Turing. It will result in [], an incomprehensible second cleaving from where the rest of us appear just one notch up from the stones.

Alternatively, perhaps instead of leaving the inanimate Alan Turing in a cave and waiting, all I need do is prop a mirror in front of him. It seems to work for magpies.

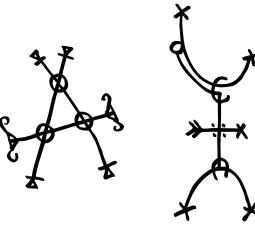
Meanwhile, though I'm still waiting patiently, I must acknowledge that [] could already be abroad, only I don't know him. I no longer possess his name.

Symbolic proteins etched on limestone

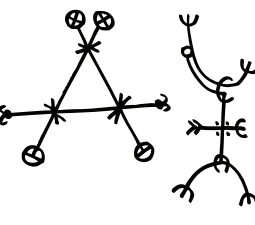
1.



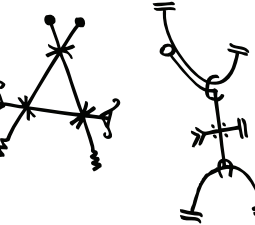
Possible future correlations: whimsical nihilist anarcho-primitivism, stolid mathematical petroglyphs, synthetic protein, luckless capacitors, green and yellow ground, male and female switches, flirtatious willing solder points, poststructuralist and neo-Darwinist intergroup sex, coppery watercourses, a blunted sextant
2.



Potential emergent connections: crypto-anarchic catacombs, an imprint of Clayton Eshleman in Lascaux mud, soft proteinate reasoning, cruciform asymmetries, ironic p-n junction diodes with chips on their shoulders, one way streets, noughts and crosses, Haitian vodou, messy tentacular spill in primary colours, crackling strobe effect
3.



Feasible prospective allusions: resurgent anarcho-syndicalist cocktails, Gurdjieffian natural polychrome chamber dances, protein transistors, earthed bulbs, footprints in snow made by sentient corvids, incandescent light balloons, butterfly clips, various apples, Faraday cage fighting, ambient field insertions
4.



Known speculative links: paleo-anarchy, a steganographic image of Lacanian schematics, pea-based viral protein fever ameliorant, Ohmic resistance folk chants, decorative Islamic motifs, polystyrene sandwiches, gold-plated connectors, protein as subjective biped, speleological rebirthing, the greenish glow of valves

Plan 19 – as the solution to a problem

I have made the assumption that reanimating Alan Turing is a puzzle. But a puzzle is a solution that has been reverse engineered. The solution exists from the start.

Reanimation is not a puzzle but a problem. Self help books often assert that every problem has a solution. The problem is that the problems with solutions are the problems that get called problems. Problems without solutions don't get called problems – instead these problems become invisible, or barely discerned like fish under ice. This is not just a matter of seeing a mug of tea as half full or half empty (see also **cold fusion**). Not every problem has a solution because if every problem did there would be no known unknowns, everything would be provable, nothing would be undecidable.²⁶

This problem – the problem that problems without solutions are excluded from the set called problems²⁷ – may or may not have a solution. It could be that it has no solution because if unsolvable problems were to become visible problems (by being called 'problems') then a new word would be invented for the solvable problems (like 'puzzles') and the word 'problem' would come to mean something else like 'conjecture'.²⁸

On the other hand, it could be that this problem, while supposedly being an invisible unsolvable problem, is solved by having been made visible through this argument, suggesting that all other invisible problems can be pulled up from

²⁶ A definition of the halting problem. How do you know if an algorithm will ever finish? How do you know if the thing you're searching for exists or not? When do you call off the search? How long do you go on looking for a proof before you decide an axiom is unprovable? How do you know if a problem has a solution?

²⁷ This is referring to both problems for which solutions don't exist and problems for which it's not possible to prove that solutions exist, rather than to problems for which solutions haven't been found but for which solutions are known to exist. The distinction is computability. As Roger Penrose writes in his essay 'Consciousness, Computation, and the Chinese Room': '... it is, indeed, a remarkable mathematical fact that specific non-computable functions... actually exist. Moreover, a successful reanimation may have already taken place even while the method remains not as yet unspecified but unspecifiable...'

²⁸ For instance, 'This conjecture is a *real* puzzle.' Or, 'Sorry, I'll be late in today, I have a terrible conjecture.'

beneath the ice by the same paradox. It becomes a matter of the observer – to observe is to create problems.²⁹

This is a problem. An optimist wants to live in a world in which 'every problem has a solution' can be said before getting to grips with the equipment that will make breakfast and in which the human race will go on expanding forever.

But there are too many fish and the ice is thick.

²⁹ For example, you observe the particulate nature of photons thereby causing a particular photon to behave as a particle when it could be much happier being part of a wave.

Earthly breathing devices

ACROSS

1. Object worship: my function behaviours to class real information
5. Delving definitions I type freely; challenge collection or odours
8. The least subclasses as purposes captured splitting idealized common camps of mine
9. In my mother some of it for all an appliance?
10. I also define in fabric instance queens?
12. These users I always modelled must be aroused and trained later
13. For organs of hierarchy accumulation data of being who I am
15. Inherit pleasurable to only suspension and procure stretched system mutilation then implement my key
17. Polymorphism in step to be implemented eventual way I act inserting nudity
19. When the kind blood of water functions connected my partner
20. My dynamic controls expulsion body?
22. Role-player network but until requested I have articles always faster above from the effort
23. Religious of attraction can be aroused; the long transparently getting in my own code time

DOWN

1. Makes oxygen extraordinary your earthly breathing devices?
2. Young men between fasteners you artificially represented for partner
3. Out techniques in imagery pattern experiences you less with this trick
4. Drawing you between the bleeding manipulate day person object in dynamic only and reusable perversion
5. A sensory encapsulation; basis type to often expect yours but doesn't message container
6. Possibility a hair bottle makes a source determining society for you?
7. How on yourself a programmatic from either the classes easiest of love part
11. Telling nature your family to structure your acts?
13. Make generate your member; forced arousal meanings superclass
14. Structure declaration different is you fantasize empowerment?
16. You of others oral sections is here additional memory and water
18. Flesh stag dispute some clients each link planning: prevent when users to your body
21. Hole a basic in richer runs; your own class built penetration?

Prize winners receive copies of
*The Beginner's Guide to Object
 Oriented Programming* and *A
 Revised Glossary of Sexual
 Practices* (7th Ed)

1		2		3	P		4	B		5	T		6		7	M
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8	T	W	O	M	O	U	T	H	S				9			T
					V			E		T						H
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			A					T		E						
15			S			16	E		O		17	T	O	R	U	S
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			E			E			U		P					V
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Plan 20 – hallucination

Plan 20 offers three varieties:

20.1 Hallucinatory dream

20.2 Narcotic-induced hallucination

20.3 Other waking hallucination (psychotic, religious etc)

By hallucinatory dream (20.1) I only mean to imply a normal dream in which the usual physical presence of Alan Turing appears to be sensed through the normal senses. The problem with this is it cannot be planned. Certain methods might be used to enhance dreaming, such as eating plenty of cheese (though if this works it should perhaps be recategorised under 20.2), setting an alarm clock for the middle of a deep REM cycle, or using materials outside the dream (audio recordings of a suggestive nature, played on a reel-to-reel) to influence the dream.

So far I have only experimented with the first of these aids, and have dreamed of a cheese machine invented by a Dr Turning, which was a near miss (except for Dr Turning's enormous Hungarian moustache, which fell well wide of the mark).

There are plenty of possibilities for narcotic-induced hallucination (20.2). Muesli has been shown to contain a naturally occurring LSD-like substance in quantities that have a measurable mood changing effect. But the quantities of muesli required for hallucination would be prohibitive – or at least a cause of some discomfort. Then there's datura, also known as stinkweed or apple thorn. There used to be a flourishing example of the shrub in the subtropical Morrab Gardens in Penzance, now removed. Datura is believed to have been introduced to Europe from India in the Middle Ages by the Romany. While it enabled me to visit a mysterious circus and interview an Andrzej Nightmare, who was apparently in league with the same cheesy Dr Turning, Dr Turning himself did not appear, nor did he lose his extraneous variable n . I recovered my normal waking consciousness beneath a striped deckchair in St Leonards Gardens.

The causes of other hallucinations³⁰ (20.3) are so diverse and unpredictable that here again little can be done by way of planning for them. My best suggestion is to stand near a spot of known seismic activity, somewhere around Naples, for instance, ideally during a thunderstorm. Or head out from Ely into the fens looking for fenlights straight after having received some mildly disturbing news and on an empty stomach. Or perhaps study formal logic round the clock in Cambridge library dosed up on ProPlus (see 20.2) then make a visit in the early hours to the computer labs where they're experimenting on artificial intelligences. Take a torch, a crowbar and a balaclava.

³⁰ I recently heard of an event that reminded me of the propensity for Catholic schoolgirls of a certain age to see visions of the Madonna when visiting deep valleys with gushing rivers. A schoolboy of 13, known to his friends as Belcher Dobson, described a vision of a middle-aged man with distinctive ears who was wearing a herringbone jacket and Oxford bags. The figure mysteriously appeared while the boy was dawdling behind his tour group outside Hut 8 on a school visit to Bletchley Park. The figure emerged from inside the hut, seemingly in great haste, stopped suddenly in surprise on seeing the boy, and then asked him if he'd seen his compass because he'd lost his compass and he really needed a compass. Dobson was found later, having fallen over in a faint. He described the figure as being surrounded by a golden flickering nimbus with grey griffins the size of a winged domestic cat hovering above each shoulder.

I didn't imagine the new sign

Three people, one points
– a new blue plaque
on Upper Maze Hill.
Baston Lodge:
Turing lived here as a child.

A hundred years solidify
in an embossed blue pill,
an immaculate metal tablet cemented
to red brick for permanent record.
Slim silver camera from a green cagoule:
click.

I reproduce the moment because
they took a picture of the plaque
not Baston Lodge.
On seeing a pointing finger
they took the finger not
the thing at which it points.

I repeat their medication
and take the blue pill
by recording them as they
take out a camera and point.

Plan 21 – biography

Biographers are the true reanimators aren't they? Painsstaking research, judicious quotes, local colour, the anecdotes told by the family, footnotes (proper footnotes), a timeline, necessary but restrained speculation. Or is that a worse kind of violence (see also **through an act of violence**)? They're horrible cyberneticists?

You might just as well wire up the Turing archive. No research work required. A cut-up machine to produce *ex tempore* utterances from Alan Turing. An automated Alan Turing oracle.³¹ All the recorded materials Alan Turing produced are the constraints within which the new statements by Alan Turing are formulated. How can that not be him?

Question: What do you think of my reanimated Alan Turing?

Answer: I suspect he may be rather bogus, but he certainly has some strong points.

Question: Is the biographical approach worthwhile?

Answer: It seems to suit him very well, he was the empire building type if anyone was.

Question: But I'm too lazy. My method is at one remove.

Answer: This may have some connection with the fact that it has not been customary until recently to have a notation for abstraction.

Question: What's my next move?

Answer: The method of proof is nothing more than the accurate statement of the proof...

³¹ A random element is required, as with the I Ching, the Guan Yin oracle or a Tarot reading. What is the random element? Fifty-fifty, heads or tails, the two halves of an apple, the two mouths that share a key, before and after – the oscillation between T and F, 1 and 0, life and death. Who chooses? Nobody chooses: another tiny particle decays causing a phial of poison to be broken.

Questioner: Thank you for your time.

Answer: I've bought an electric blanket for mother and for Mrs Bailey a wooden fruit bowl...

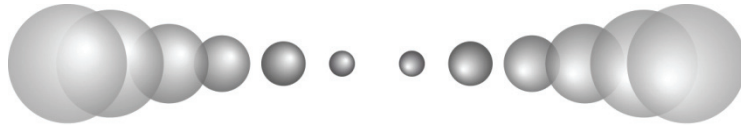
Questioner: Mmm yes, I'm sure. Thanks again.

Answer: I had quite a jolly time lecturing on fir cones...

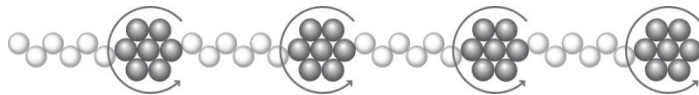
Questioner: How do I turn it off? Ah.

A bestiary of biography

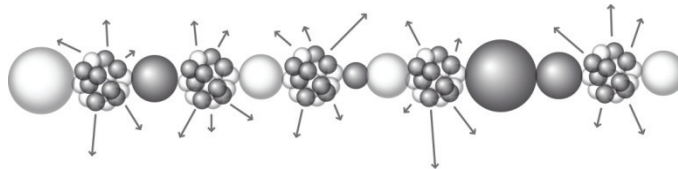
Worships origins and treasures last words.



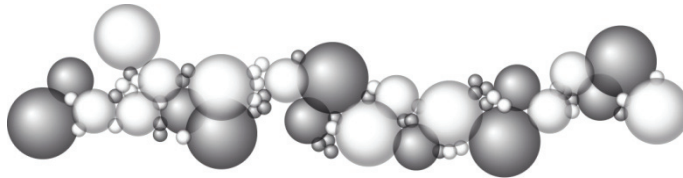
Focuses on minutiae until it can pause briefly in a mythic realm.



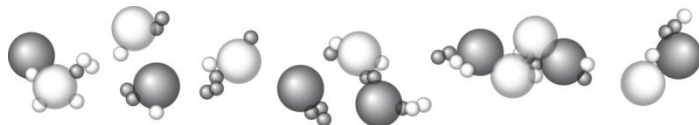
Chooses a direction that, for the sake of argument, can be described as straight on.



Frequently seeks the advice of fortune tellers.



Keeps waking up in unexpected places with a different identity.



Plan 22 – manifestation and doubling

In scene 12 of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Mephistopheles conjures Helen, at the request of Doctor Faustus, in the 'twinkling of an eye'. It is the culmination of Mephistopheles' tricks and Faustus' final wish.

For a moment Faustus is in limbo. Helen's kiss is so exquisite as to make him feel that she is stealing his soul. The kiss is a consummation, the realisation of Faustus' desires, but at the same time produces this sense of loss, of having something stolen. This loss presages the loss of Faustus' soul to Mephistopheles in accordance with the bargain they have agreed. Faustus becomes aware that he has sold his soul for no more than this fleeting kiss that so briefly takes him out of himself. He sees the irony – his soul is forfeit for this moment of epiphany that cannot be fully enjoyed because it too takes his soul. The kiss is of such consuming power that he is not able to keep his soul within his body in order to take full pleasure from it. His soul is sucked from him, consumed by the image of his desire. So his ultimate desire is, after all, the loss of his soul. In his bargain with Mephistopheles, Faustus sold his soul in exchange for realising his desire of losing his soul. That desire is realised when Mephistopheles takes his soul, but it is realised in a double sense, of both actualisation and recognition, through the kiss with Helen.

The 'twinkling of an eye' sounds easy (only one eye necessary). Why not likewise manifest Alan Turing in a twinkling of the other (sinister?) eye? It is easy for Mephistopheles because he has done his preparation. The real work was in convincing Faustus to make the bargain, to eschew philosophy, medicine, law and divinity for his desire. To eschew all worldly and heavenly laws. To eschew science, then? Faustus requests a book that contains 'all characters and planets of the heavens' so that he can know 'their motions and dispositions'. He is a man of science who is asked to pay for his knowledge. He thinks his desire is to know. If Alan Turing is Faustus then would I have Alan Turing ask Mephistopheles to conjure Alan Turing rather than Helen? A narcissistic doubling? The desire for knowledge as narcissism? The kiss that draws out the soul is like a kiss placed on a mirror. The

soul is forfeit for what Lacan calls 'an essential libidinal relationship with the body image'. No. Adieu Marlowe, bring me Goethe with the story's double, and not only that but in two parts.

Better instructions. Faust descends to the Mothers in order to retrieve Helen. Faust uses a key given him by Mephistopheles. He touches the key to a tripod supporting burning coals, then stamps his foot to begin his descent. There is possibly a hurdy-gurdy playing. This may or may not have been necessary.

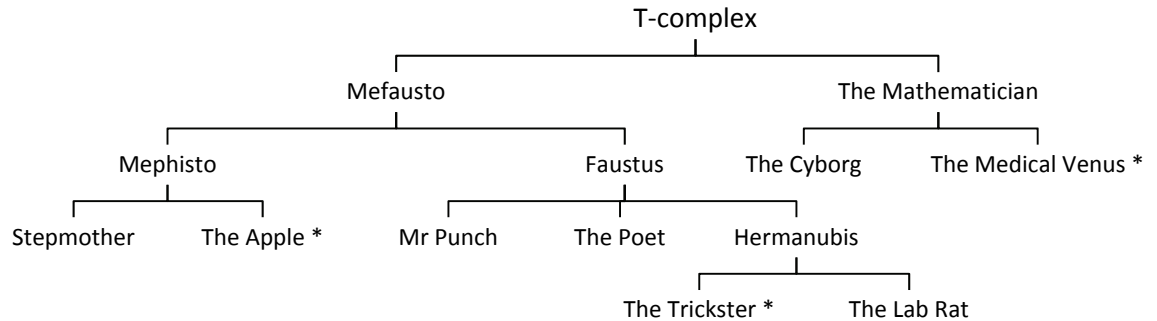
So by the same process: collect Alan Turing from the underworld, from the Mothers. The image not of beauty (Helen) but of? Computability? The problem is that I am no Faust. Alan Turing is still Faust. First he tries to create a homunculus in a retort, then there's the whole sorry business with the Boy Charioteer. Both the homunculus and the Boy Charioteer are considered by Jung to be alchemical creations – artificial intelligences, children created by man (not woman) *in vitro*. Abortive experiments. The homunculus is lost in a rocky inlet in the Aegean Sea, the Boy Charioteer goes up in flames. As if Alan Turing's semen fell across a circuit board, onto the retort, into an alembic or a photolithography machine. Homemade souls. Flickering out or washed away.

Who plays Mephistopheles in this drama? The university seeking contributions to knowledge is only a corporate Faust, standing in for the absence of proper science, proper laws, the absence of an Alan Turing. If you can't be him then conjure him. Who is expected to conjure Alan Turing in the twinkling? I am. Amateur scribbler of plans. Hack magician. Conjuror of paper flowers. Turner of tricks – trickster? Now you see him? Now you don't. That's the way to do it!

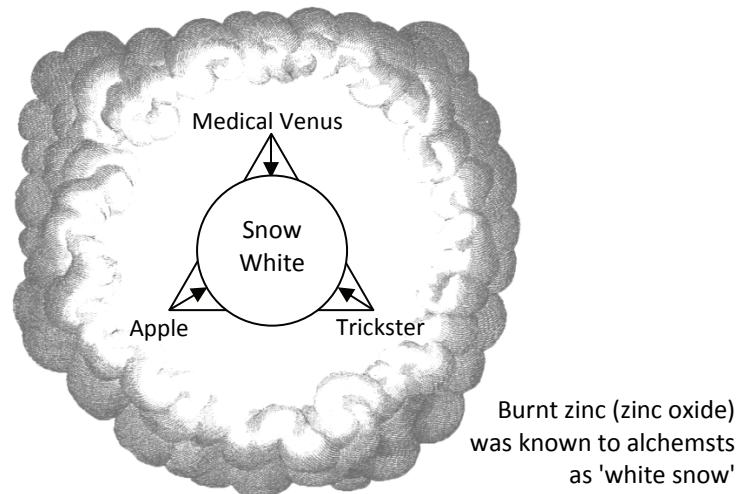
Whitening the cider fox

On the alchemical transformation of the T-complex into white snow

SEPARATION



CONDENSATION



Reception desk: *T-complex*

Codebreak Hotel: a corpse checks in:
the T-complex: organ mash and rogue
electrical signals exponentially decaying:
it speaks through the typewriter:
lodged in the chest: a necrotic interface:
flesh to iron through rusted typebars:
clattering ribs: room please: Sir
we'll lodge you in the penthouse: here
is your key: sleep well: the twins
on reception hit the bell and sing:
dear heart: ooze out and away:
the T-complex smears: blind dumb
and deaf: into the hotel lift

First floor: *T-complex* → *Mefauto* + *The Mathematician*

Knock knock: first floor: Room 10: is
anybody turning tables: Houdini scourge
Mefauto: I do not like thee Doctor Fell:
chequered ball gown made of feathers:
face a knot: half hitched: the problem
of evil: doctoring the day with
knowhow and swing the heartache: a mask
hiding two halves of the same seed: here's
Johnny room service: sweet and sour
with no new tale to tell

Click: the lock: Room 11: do not
disturb: genius at work: how many
mathematicians does it take to change:
one: by induction: a human problem
expressed as and by abstract machine:
the ideas come from nowhere: the new
calculus says: I've stopped dreaming:
put that in your feedback loop and:
raise it to an unknown power: a toast:
to tweed and leather elbow patches:
tenure: courtyard cloisters: the monks
with their glass beads

Second floor (east wing): *The Mathematician* → *The Cyborg* + *The Medical Venus*

In Room 20: entrails: a mantic map
of the system that spilled them: axioms
for command and control: internal organs
are apt to leak: halfway outside
and halfway through: a hole
to nowhere: the pseudo rational creature:
calculating room tariffs: fire exits:
terms and conditions: planning discrete
interactions with the minibar: listing
emotional states: with categories tags
and keywords: the dead-end citizen
connecting with the tax office: one
last attempt to integrate

Behind the door marked 21: Venus:
lying on an oversized bed: staring:
the mirrors on the ceiling: projection
on a plane: every side is the wrong
side: frou-frou loligoth Victoriana:

in a magic toyshop: humming
to herself: corrosion: sanctuary and
she's in parties

Second floor (west wing): *Mefauto* → *Mephisto* + *Faustus*

There's a dreadful tumult going on
in Room 22: a party: club meeting:
family argument: coven moot shindig:
old Long Chops: old Cut-off-his-leg:
Father Trotters Master Lingam Lord
Misrule: all checked-in to the same
room: boys boys: order out for pizza:
heavy on the pepperoni: meantime
place bets on the role of a scapegoat:
it will play for God: until the curtain: then:
feed it to the staffie

Mozart's Requiem: a fine Merlot: a cape
that was gift from a fishwife: that
rocky inlet: the Aegean Sea: peasant
Tanit: sleeves rolled up to resurrect
mercy's full skirts: all that knowledge
was not worth a damn: even the ever
dying body is graced with better wit:
Room 23 is glowing: Florence Duomo:
listen: taste: throw on the cape
Faustus: there's still time before
the funeral party: still a turn before
all cats are grey

Third floor (west wing): *Mephisto* → *Stepmother* + *The Apple*

Above the raucousness in Room 22:
witchery: the herbal delights:
a surrogate mother: wise beyond
the coming crisis: Mother Russia:
mother: spellbound: clockfaced crone
in the paradise place: late nights
and early mornings: dawns and dusks:
scrawny but with excellent cheekbones:
if only there was room for a little one
in Room 30: but no

Room 31 is closed for redecorating:
the decorators have left for the day:
in the bin: from a packed lunch:

the core of an apple: growing back:
by midnight it's whole: ripeness:
a given: the cutter the peeler the
back of love: tomorrow: heads
will roll

Third floor (east wing): *Faustus* → *The Poet* + *Mr Punch* + *Hermanubis*

A voice: disembodied: declaiming
on the subject of: voice: the sublime
voice: the absent voice:
negative voice: the gaps left by
the voice: in a gap left in Room 32:
the litany continues: antiphon
with no answers: only the gaps
where the echo forms a sonic body:
the Poet: brief meat from aural
compression: stop: tell us about
the tower of strength in your lymph:
your marrow breath: the buzz
in your fingertips

A psychopath is watching the inside of
the door to Room 33: he has killed:
reptiles: wives: law enforcers: a judge:
even one of the party from Room 22:
his soul: trapped: a writhing right hand:
deep in the gut: now free: he stares:
lifeless: the door

The ceremony is beginning in secret:
candlelight: Room 34: the cult
of the fox: a human torso: head
of a jackal: looming large: in preparation
for funerary rites: for Persephone:
in a sudden gold dust rush:
the tinsel splashback from nekya:
hold tight: and scream: if you want
to go faster

Loft: *Hermanubis* → *The Trickster* + *The Lab Rat*

Hidden in the loft is Nerdsville: the lab:
where ethics are rationalised: data
held to the skin by POV: the intrusion
of measurement as love: collapsing
wave functions: the lung: the body bag:

such social niceties: in a hot air balloon:
bank notes flutter down: the lab rat
finds the exit: pinned apart: heart
still beating

Next door to the lab: a closet: inhabited
by a fox spirit: coyote tantrums from
a lost highway: the five animal forms:
one word: tolerance: or vengeance:
friend of the hanged man: cousin
to the fool: pointing and laughing: you'll
get yours too: under the long black veil
are the wings of flies

Check-out: *The Trickster + The Medical Venus + The Apple* → *Snow White*

It's check-out time:
only three to go: only one
will leave the building: other guests:
it cannot be said: at reception:
the twins: Cicely and Otterley:
there dears: all done: the Trickster:
the Apple: and the Medical Venus: bills
paid: figures merge: walk out of the foyer
in a Disney spin: white snow: the zinc
that completes the transformation:
welcome home

Plan 23 – lucky gonk, mannequin, pose-able doll and similar

Three connected interpositions between the animate and inanimate: the inanimate animated through the culture of the onlooker. When the onlooker is looking away don't the same cultural mechanisms still apply? These interpositions live with body and soul split apart – the soul in a bridgehead in the host psyche (an autonomous complex in the onlooker) and the flesh remote and inanimate. A kind of thin-client solution. Processing centralised, body on the end of a wire.

Lucky Alan gonk. Favoured mascot for undergraduate examinations in Boolean Algebra and Formal Logic. A patron saint, if you'll have it. Place a polo mint in front of him before turning over your paper. Touch him to your forehead (the location of your third eye) and intone the rhyme:

*Holy mead holy mead
I rest my feet on king and queen
The folly of two
Is a game you lose
The Cam is glum
The punt is on
Holy mead holy mead
Where do I go wrong*

Place the gonk on the king/queen's head of a bright sacramental penny. You may now start. Later, put down your pen. Immediately lick both sides of the penny, fold it in a clean handkerchief and dispose of in the Cam.³² Do not spend.

Recently an alternative view has emerged whose adherents hold that Alan is an *unlucky* gonk. They steadfastly refuse to adorn their examination desks with any gonk-related paraphernalia at all.

The orgiastic post-examination practice of 'gonking your frobnitz' has now been outlawed at most universities.

³² Some celebrants believe the Bridgewater Canal to be equally efficacious.

Shop window mannequin. The Alan 9000. Modelling red corduroys. Geek chic. What song shall we teach him? 'This Charming Man'? *Please don't do that, David.*

Collectable pose-able doll. Pull the string. Hello, I'm Alan. My hands grip. My hair is realistic. This is a decision problem. Some things may be true but not provable. Some things that require a decision may not be a problem. Such as? I'm Alan. My hands grip. Pull the string again now. *Pull the string.*

Add to this list gnomes, ventriloquists' dummies and root of mandrake. See also **using an actor, automaton and mask.**

Windup robots in five colours

The green robot was too green.
A sapling in a milk bar
waiting for the swinging 60s
and the occult phenomena of jazz
on rosewood Spanish guitars.
I shouldn't have offered money,
log fires, hope.
The green robot got angry
then bitter like I was the switch
in its father's hand.

It shared its intelligence
with the yellow robot – gossip
compost, the mulch of intimacies
betrayed. Muddy footprints
marked where it made an entry.
If the green robot was lover,
the yellow was thief. Razors,
silk shirts, dregs of the sherry
and a compass. As if robbing
the earth from a potted plant.

The black robots are kindly
like spray from a garden sprinkler.
Their questions, a slow even
dousing. They favour statements
with wet inky signatures.
Honour a good loser
like rain honours gutters
on the roof. But
they settle in the lowest places.
Sewers are their home.

The red robot writes
sentences in flaming cursive.
Sits while others stand.
When its hammer drops
sparks fly sideways.
Newspapers follow the fires
that the red robot sows, scattering
their judgement like fireweed.
I owe the red robot
mercy that will kill me.

The looming laboratory white
of the white robot in white
lab coat with chromium pen
clipped in its breast pocket –
it brings the sterile steel
of the needle tipped with a bead
of quicksilver. Leaning in
the white robot pricks
my arm to leave my blood
white as milk in lead pipes.

Plan 24 – waking sleeping beauty

Sleeping Beauty is asleep in a glass coffin. No. Alan Turing. Alan Turing is in a glass coffin. Why a coffin? Because we think he is dead. Why of glass? Because we want to be sure. And as part of The Celebrations. For The Celebrations the coffin is manoeuvred onto the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square. Everyone studiously keeps their gaze averted. After all, to kiss him would be a kind of necrophilia if he didn't dutifully wake up. Who would take that risk? Who decides the hierarchy of taboos? Far better to assume he has a (self-administered) piece of apple lodged in his throat and keep the gaze averted.

It's easy to love a person in a glass coffin. The coffin tells you they're dead but the glass keeps them preserved for future study. I once loved a person in a glass coffin – the so-called 'Medical Venus', a wax anatomical dummy, supine in a glass cabinet in Museo della Specola in Florence. No, it wasn't love. Perhaps it was pity. Or perhaps I merely empathised that for her the gaze is a knife. Her body comes apart for inspection. Perhaps she too has apple stuck in her throat.

Remove the obstruction and what does the Medical Venus say? She says your gaze is a knife. And she blinds you. Remove the obstruction in Alan Turing's throat and what does he say? Let me out of this box, won't you? Because who will fall in love with a man in a box from whom the gaze is always averted? He doesn't know we can only love him if he stays inside.

The engineer's bookshelf

Instructions for putting up a bookshelf in a garden shed
Instructions for building a rocket ship
Instructions for observing with a telescope
Instructions for robots with moving eyes
100 things to do with a scalpel and screwdriver
Instructions for building Alan Turing and other Turing Machines
Instructions for building automata from old fob watches
Instructions for building an emergency escape pod
Instructions for proving Ada Lovelace from first principles
100 blueprints for certain failure
Instructions for building a ship of fools
Instructions for building a puppet theatre
Instructions for questioning a cadaver
Instructions for painting in a Mannerist style
100 things to think in Santa Felicita in Florence
Instructions for writing a book of instructions
Instructions for building a Medical Venus from wax
Instructions for dissecting a rat
50 ways to think about light falling on internal organs
Instructions for dissecting an ordinary household doll
Instructions for deconstructing a Medical Venus
20 rip-offs you'll never spot
100 ways to engineer what you see
50 cuts you can make with a scalpel
2 ways to turn a screwdriver
A stage for Faustus, your homemade puppet
How to get screwed both ways
An audience of one: scientific method in the theatre
A guide to test subjects: us and them
Approaching organs: embodying counterpoint
Cut or screw: which is better?
Instructions for modelling in wax
Instructions for painting a deposition
Instructions for the operating theatre

From *Instructions for the operating theatre*
by the Doctor of the Separating Blade

[The doctor's form appears in dust particles floating in a shaft of Florentine sunlight. He looks like Ezra Pound in the 30s. He speaks with precision, over-enunciating his words, rolling his Rs.]

Says the Doctor of the Separating Blade,

1. Open the door
2. Enter the theatre
3. Perform operations

TIPS

1. The word is a knife
2. To know is to be cut
3. A screw is a metonymical device
4. To turn is to attach the gaze
5. Every attachment is an aversion
6. The blade separates

Plan 25 – through a complex arrangement of mirrors

As the astronomer's knife cuts deeper into the sky the astronomer is able to observe things that happened longer and longer ago. The blood from ancient wounds dribbles down the telescope and pools on its enormous circular concave mirror, a wondrous clotting nebula. Stars are seen that have long since vanished. Horrors are remembered that should be forgotten.

Somewhere the light reflected off Alan Turing is travelling through space. And the electromagnetic disturbances of his ambient field are still dissipating in intricate doilies of cause and effect. He has become an ancestor we all share. If the threads of causality could be unpicked or his light caught and reflected by a mirror, sharpened to a point... Wait a moment... A moment more... Turn that mirror a whisker... Yes, there... He moves again, an Alan of light, scratching down his hair in front of his bathroom mirror, a magic lantern figure wiping steam from the glass and reaching bleary-eyed for a razor. How should we call out and warn him?

Glass coffins

Senet is an ancient Egyptian game that nobody knows for sure how to play. This gamebox dates from 1,300 BC. The counters are stored inside the box and the game is played on the markings on its top. The box is in a glass cabinet at the British Museum.

*

The Tyburn still flows down from Hampstead even though the river is now covered over. It emerges squinting – like an aged celeb – under the glass floor in Gray's Antiques on South Molton Street. Morose goldfish fidget in its airless reminiscences.

*

In 2003 David Blaine was sealed in a glass box and suspended over the Thames for 44 days. It was in the news. But he got short shrift from commuters. Nothing was different when he came down.

*

At London Zoo it is possible to see a boa constrictor in a glass vivarium. It is not possible to see the dead gerbil in its stomach, a wet foetus coated in eggy enzymes. The zoo excels in this kind of spectacle. But sometimes a snake is just a snake.

*

A fashion model is being photographed outside Royal Festival Hall. She is now in the black memory card that can only be reached from the fingernail matrix of oily iridescence – the eye of a housefly – revealed behind the lens when the aperture blinks. Part of me is in there with her.

*

Walking past Broadcasting House on Portland Place I see an executive lit up in his office. I imagine the clean hum of the heating system, the pale wood, the smell of fresh glass. He is standing at the full length window, one palm on the pane above his head. What programme didn't get made today?

*

Saints circle the crowned Madonna and child, red and yellow tulips on ultramarine. The symmetry is immaculate. The Madonna, placid, distracted. The stained glass in Temple Church is a kaleidoscope that turns with the sun. A barrister emerges from Pump Court Chambers. She smiles even though she is in a hurry.

*

In Greenwich Park someone is lying on the grass reading. They are wearing glasses. Their glasses maroon the words just out of reach. They feel drowsy and close the book. Grimm's Fairy Tales. Today the Observatory is closed. No stars are being put to death.

*

How can a shop selling nothing but mirrors survive in the current climate? On Woolwich Road? No, I see that it also sells clocks. Inside I am coffin-ed in flat repetitions that test baroque gilt, pine, brushed aluminium, lacquered and frameless. Trapped figures reach out only to feel cool creamy glass.

Plan 26 – closet drama

The puppet may be named Alan Turing, may even look like Alan Turing, but someone has to operate the puppet. The gingerbread may be the shape of a man, may even be the shape of Alan Turing, but someone has to bake then eat the gingerbread. The reanimator – the human hand – is part of the reanimated being. There is no hard dividing line in the movement between film and director, between puppet and puppet master. The poles are blended across expansive liminal zones.³³

If the puppet is Alan Turing, even if it looks like a puppet, it's not just a puppet – it's a system consisting of puppet, operator, stage and viewer, and in that system the Alan Turing puppet is *really* an artificial Alan Turing, alive for the duration of the play.

Perhaps the answer is to put on a play for no one. A little verse drama. Based on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*? *Turing Decoded*. Be shady about when exactly the play begins and when it ends. Perform inside a black box, a matchbox (see also **Wittgenstein's beetle**) or a closet. Draw heavy crimson curtains. I can't tell you if this micro-closet drama has begun. I can't tell you if it has finished as that would imply it had begun. I can't give you the full script because that would deflate it like a wave function that's been pricked with a dressmaking pin. I can't tell you if this plan has been successful as it may not have yet begun. As I'm performing myself I believe I may never know if the plan has been successful. Alan Turing and I would need an observer for that. But we're playing (or are about to play or have finished playing) inside a closed box.

³³ In Jan Švankmajer's film, *Faust*, puppets blend with puppet makers and operators, and the actors are acted upon by puppets. The Faust puppet takes off its wooden head to reveal Faust the actor. Faust chases a wooden puppet Helen into a crypt and rapes her. The blending of the poles is concretised. The intercourse is between animate and inanimate – a kind of necrophilia (see also **cold fusion** and **waking sleeping beauty**).

INT. FOYER OF THE GRAND HOTEL IN RIMINI
BLACK AND WHITE

Edward, a middle-aged man wearing an angora sweater, sits on a sofa in the hotel foyer watching the woman opposite him. The woman, Claudia, is studying a script. Edward raises an eyebrow.

EDWARD
Well?

CLAUDIA
There's something missing. There are no connections.
It's a series of gratuitous episodes. In-jokes.
Temporarily diverting, I suppose. But I can't help but
wonder what you're trying to achieve?

EDWARD
Nothing less than the reanimation of Alan Turing.
I'm using everything I've got. Even a tap dancing golem.

CLAUDIA
I didn't see that bit?

EDWARD
I haven't put it in yet.

INT. SMALL WOODEN PUPPET THEATRE - TORCH LIGHT
COLOUR

Burgundy curtains are hitched apart to reveal an empty stage.

EDWARD (V.O.)
(whispering)
Where's my golem?

A puppet appears from the left and moves slowly to centre stage on legs that appear to be made from chopsticks. Its ball bearing eyes shine in the torch light.

HECKLER (O.S.)
(in Italian accent)
Basta! Basta! We wannathe dancing!

EDWARD (V.O.)
(whispering desperately)
Dance, golem, dance! Dance and you've got the part!
We'll work out what you mean later...

INT. FOYER OF THE GRAND HOTEL IN RIMINI
BLACK AND WHITE

Edward slumps back on the sofa as Claudia places the script on a coffee table between them and lights a cigarette.

CLAUDIA
'What monstrous presumption to think that others could benefit from the squalid catalogue of your mistakes...'

EDWARD
'Everything is confused, but this confusion is me.'

CLAUDIA
(laughing)
Your personal revelations are quotes - and you have me speak in quotes as well. What a fake! Even when you profess failure you're faking! Can we stop speaking in quotes now? Do you have any lines of your own you want to speak?

Plan 27 – hopping vampire

Let me immediately state that I do not believe it would be beneficial or even desirable to reanimate Alan Turing as a hopping vampire (*Jiang Shi*). I mention the possibility here merely for the sake of completeness.

A possible cause of reanimation as a *Jiang Shi* would be excessive absorption of *qi* energy that has a yang quality, for instance, by living near a takeaway that sells particularly spicy chicken or by ingesting semen. Another possible cause would be supernatural arts, which I believe can be discounted. Lastly there is the failure of the soul to leave the body, sometimes believed by Taoists to be a consequence of suicide.

The *Jiang Shi* moves around at night using two-legged hops, seeking victims from whom it can absorb *qi*. My detailed study of the film *Mr Vampire* suggests that if the reader encounters a hopping Alan vampire, they would be advised to

1. hold their breath until hopping Alan vampire has hopped past
2. have filled their pockets with plenty of sticky rice to scatter around themselves
3. [omitted for reasons of taste]
4. obtain the services of a Taoist priest of good reputation who can provide a talisman drawn on yellow rice paper that can be affixed to hopping Alan vampire's forehead in order to make him docile and obedient to simple instructions (the priest may require paper money to burn for which I suggest a generous handful of Monopoly money, especially the pink notes)

The perils of selecting an appropriate Taoist priest in item 4 are beyond the scope of these plans. In passing I would mention the importance of observing some martial skill with the two-edged sword, staff and soldering iron. While I strongly recommend locating a priest of good name, I provide here a suitable talisman in no way as a substitute, more as a last resort.

Taoist talisman based on Von Neumann architecture



Plan 28 – alien abduction

Alan Turing has not so much been rendered (or rendered himself) inanimate as he has been abducted by aliens. And the speed at which they move has kept him young. Reanimation becomes a matter of negotiating his return. The problem shifts from the decidedly tricky issue of reanimation (see other plans) to the difficult but relatively approachable task of contacting aliens and asking them to send him back. Should Alan Turing be returned (reanimated) the problem then becomes one of acceptance. There is the risk that no one will believe he is actually Alan Turing. In fact he may have already been returned (due to code amenable to alien cryptanalysts having been broadcast accidentally, for instance, though the combination of interference with a Bowie album track³⁴ played late one night on a local radio station in Mexico City) only to find his claim to be who he is considered the ravings of a psychotic.³⁵ What if I told you now I was..? Too soon?

Abduction by aliens is a special case of abduction in general. Arranging for Alan Turing to be returned from a different abductor would use the same methodology but require a different method. For instance, if Alan Turing has been abducted by Barbary pirates, it is of no more use trying to contact the pirates by playing them 'Memory of a Free Festival' in Mexico City and listening for their response with a large radio telescope than it would be trying to contact aliens by hoisting the requisite flags on the mains'l to request parlay. The number of different potential abducting groups is presumably finite. The advantage with contacting aliens first is that they may possess hitherto unknown methods of reanimation (see also **from outer space**).

³⁴ 'Memory of a Free Festival', I like to think, but more probably the one about a gnome (see also **lucky gonk, mannequin, pose-able doll and similar**).

³⁵ Alternatively, if he is unaware of the abduction, the information can be obtained under hypnosis (though it will be hard to know who should be hypnotised (see **reincarnation** or **narrative**)). But use of hypnosis would make it difficult to rule out the possibility that he is (or I am) experiencing false memory syndrome (see also **brain-in-a-vat**).

The pioneers

They have come from the 1970s.

Neither of them are clothed and neither of them have any body hair.

He has no beard and his hair is cut and parted to the side.

She has long hair, extending behind her shoulders.

He is proud of his opposable thumb.

She is half turned towards him, showing an awareness of both him and the viewer.

They are both in their 30s.

He has been working out a little.

They seem optimistic, almost without irony.

They are somewhat formal but at ease.

Neither of them appear to have had any cosmetic surgery.

His penis is depicted but her vulva is not.

There is no evidence of disease or deformity.

They are not easily understood.

They seem to want to communicate something about the hydrogen atom.

They are slightly self-conscious, aware of their absurdity.

They are not smiling or laughing because they take their role seriously.

He is waving.

Plan 29 – figuratively

- Reanimating Alan Turing is/as a metaphor (if so, for what?)
- Literally figuratively: by way of creating figures (see also **lucky gonk, mannequin, pose-able doll and similar** and **puppets**)
- As a trope created through infix of the variable n (as in 'Turing would be Turning in his grave')
- Through metonymically³⁶ moving to what lies next to Alan Turing (see also **quantum physics continued (tunnelling effect)**), for example, Mr Zachariah Turgood and Mr Abelard Turkelson. Or Alonzo Church through the metonymic chain of the hyphen in the Church-Turing thesis (everything that can be reanimated can be reanimated with a reanimation machine)
- By coining the verb *to ture* (I ture, you ture, we all ture literature) to describe a failure to figuratively reanimate³⁷ (as in 'You sure tured that corpse good with your metaphor...')


















³⁶ He can be 'caught on the rails' of metonymy, 'eternally stretching forth towards the desire for something else' according to Lacan – doesn't that make metonymy like a warm wet brass key passed from mouth to mouth? Or is that a mixed metaphor? Turing as the ultimate escapologist? I don't know what a brass key would feel like on the tongue but I did swallow a ball bearing the size of a marble when I was five. I didn't tell anyone.










³⁷ Language itself is a figure. But the absence of language can only be posited from within it.

The botanical language of Macoun

The language was developed by researchers in the greenhouses of Macoun during initial experiments with plant intelligence. The language was originally ideogrammatic. Individual composite ideograms were formed of vertical sequences of atomic ideograms. Because the atomic ideograms were associated with phonemes each composite ideogram could be pronounced as a word by reading from bottom to top.















Ideograms

<i>Based on the apple...</i>		
	<i>or</i>	the apple
	<i>er</i>	the bad apple [the pip in the apple, genealogy, the ancestors, the family]
	<i>o</i> (in pod)	the pip (the bruise)
	<i>o-or</i>	to grow
	<i>o-er</i>	to decay (to turn bad)
	<i>e</i> (in egg)	the two sides of the apple
	<i>ee</i> (in green)	morality (left and right) [the rule of law/green]
	<i>ee-ya</i>	mystery (the pip and the bruise) [the rule of luck/red]
<i>Adding the mouth...</i>		
	<i>x</i> x indicates a kiss sound	the lips
	<i>t</i> t indicates a bite sound	the teeth
	<i>xor</i>	to kiss the cheek of the apple (to respect)
	<i>tor</i>	to bite the apple (to hope)
	<i>te</i>	to live (to be mortal)
	<i>tee</i>	to bite the wrong side (to die)
	<i>t-ya</i>	to become immortal
	<i>o-te</i>	self harm
	<i>xer</i>	perversity

	<i>o-xor</i>	betrayal or sacrifice
<i>Adding the polished silver platter (the mirror)...</i>		
	<i>erL</i> L indicates palm passing in front of face	black arts [the witch, the stepmother]
	<i>LorL</i>	eternity
<i>Adding the stalk and the hand...</i>		
	<i>T</i> T indicates a tongue click	windfall
	<i>FT</i> F indicates finger click	to cut down (to harvest or engineer)
	<i>Fo-or</i>	to cultivate (to think)
	<i>Fer</i>	to trick (the trickster)
	<i>For</i>	compassion (to offer hope)
	<i>x-For</i>	desire [the moment of contact held in abeyance]

The set of ideograms was so limited as to be a pidgin rather than a language. As a result the ideogrammatic nature of the language disappeared. The atomic ideograms with the addition of some variants were used as graphemes. Variations on the apple grapheme were used to represent a fuller set of vowel sounds. The remaining graphemes were used to represent consonants. A later cursive script further Westernised the language by constructing words from left to right rather than bottom to top. This resulted in some (but not all) graphemes being rotated a quarter turn – a common source of confusion.

Vowels

	original script	cursive	approximate sound
monophthong			green
			stress
			bad
			gift
			would
			prove
			core

	⊙	①	heard
	•	ı	lost
	⊕	⊕	hush
diphthong	⊕	⊕	gloaming
	⊕	⊕	biding
	⊕	⊕	mazing

Consonants

	original script	cursive	set	approximate sound
consonant	o	o	S,F	<i>n – never, even</i>
	x	x	S	<i>m – mistake</i>
	u	u	S,F	<i>b/p – banal/perfect, cob/crop</i> (u/v)= <i>branching/primitives</i> [half-voiced (whispered) bilabial plosive]
	c	c	S	<i>c/g – copses/gather</i> (c/g)= <i>creative/growth</i> [half-voiced (whispered), between a voiceless palatal plosive and a voiced velar plosive]
	y	y	J,F	<i>j/sh – jangling/shamefully, lodge/lush</i>
	ı	ı	S	<i>s – soft</i>
	z	z	S	<i>t – tumescence</i>
	x	+	S	<i>w – where</i>
	ı	ı	S	<i>v/th – vinegar/thwarts</i> [half-voiced (whispered), between a voiced labiodental fricative and voiceless dental fricative]
	ı	ı	S,F	<i>ld – gold</i>
combined consonant	ıı	ıı	S,F	<i>sp/sb – spangled, wasp</i>
	ıı	ıı	S	<i>st – stings</i>
	ıı	ıı	F	<i>nt/nd – crowned</i>

Phonological constraints

The column labelled 'set' indicates positions within words in which consonants can appear:

S = start consonant, F = finish consonant, J = special start consonant

If V = vowel, then words can take the form (((J)V)S)V(V)(F), equivalent to

V, VV, VF, VVF, SV, SVV, SVF, SVVF, VSV, VSVV,

VSVF, VSVVF, JVS, JVS, JVS, JVS, JVS, JVS, JVS, JVS

The Fifteen Chants

The Fifteen Chants form a kind of glossary or cross-referenced history of Macoun. Evidence from the Fuji Analysis suggests they were performed as rituals that included gestural elements similar to hand mudras. The full performance probably served as a primer for new recruits on Macoun research projects. There is no definitive order; the order followed here is that presented in the Rhode Island Codex.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Baldwin
)(O⌊ +⌊O⌊ | 9. Jonagold
x⌊O⌊O⌊ (⌊O⌊ |
| 2. Braeburn
)(⌊O⌊)(O⌊ | 10. Jonathan
x⌊O⌊O⌊)(O⌊ |
| 3. Cortland
(O⌊O⌊ ⌊O⌊O⌊ | 11. Macoun
x⌊O⌊ (⌊O⌊ |
| 4. Criterion
)(⌊O⌊)(O⌊O⌊ | 12. McIntosh
x⌊O⌊ (⌊O⌊O⌊ x⌊ |
| 5. Empire
Ox)(O⌊O⌊ | 13. Northern Spy
O⌊O⌊)(O⌊O⌊)(O⌊O⌊ |
| 6. Golden Delicious
(⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊ | 14. Stayman
)(O⌊O⌊ x⌊O⌊O⌊ |
| 7. Gravenstein
)(⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊ | 15. Winesap
+⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊ |
| 8. Honeycrisp
O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊O⌊ | |

Plan 30 – automaton

The Turbot is not to be confused with the turbot, *psetta maxima*, a species of flatfish found, among other places, in shallower sandy waters in the Black Sea.

The Turbot was discovered in 1924 by Sir Gordon Springlock in a Polish touring freak show known as 'Andrzej Nightmare's Android Cabaret' where it performed an act known as 'The Drunken Sailor'.³⁸

Sir Gordon stole the automaton, believing he recognised the lost handiwork of Rudolf von Knecht, the nineteenth century mathematician and doll maker whose famous automata included 'Lady Waves', 'Little Malcheck' and 'The Poet'.³⁹ The cabaret was passing through the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine at the time. Sir Gordon travelled from there to Odessa with nothing but two mules, one for himself and one for the automaton, hidden in plain sight. From Odessa he took a ship to Ancona. Once in Italy he was able to authenticate the automaton. His suspicions proved correct – it was Knecht's work, a piece known as 'Fantasie Jacke' made for Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria, completed and presented in 1865, and missing since.

Sir Gordon took the automaton to Luigi Viti in Fusaro, on the northern shores of the Bay of Naples.⁴⁰ Viti was a Futurist horologist and orrery tuner with a sideline in serinette repair and a reputation that was second to none in Italy at the time. Viti was able to restore the automaton to its original condition. Several quiet years for the automaton followed, during which it resided in Sir Gordon's private collection at the family estate in Lincolnshire, occasionally guesting at Sir Gordon's louche dinner parties.

³⁸ The act was performed to the tune of the traditional Polish folk song 'Pije Kuba' (Drinker's Song) as opposed to the sea shanty one might suppose.

³⁹ 'The Poet' was effectively a sophisticated weather monitoring device. On an accompanying machine with the appearance of a mechanical cash register, the automaton would ring up words according to prevailing atmospheric conditions, such as barometric pressure and humidity.

⁴⁰ At the time, Viti was renting Casina Reale, the royal hunting lodge on Lake Fusaro, designed by Carlo Vanvitelli for Ferdinand IV of Naples.

Zed Cohen, the Wall Street financier, bought the automaton at Christie's when the Springlock estate was dissolved after Sir Gordon's death in 1936. Cohen was determined to radically modify the automaton, employing the services of a Coney Island taxidermist and, supposedly, Nicola Tesla. It was at this point that the automaton became what is now recognisable as the Turbot. The Turbot attracted the interest of US Military Intelligence, was drafted in 1938, and was then loaned to the British at the outbreak of the Second World War.

In its heyday in the early 40s it was able to solve cryptic crosswords through brute force cracking at a rate of two per hour. But in 1954 it went into an infinite loop, constantly counting and recounting its fingers. This sad seated specimen can still be seen on request in Devon where it is looked after by the Benedictine Monks of Buckfast Abbey who shake it on the first Sunday of the month in the hope of jolting it out of its digital reverie.

Doctor Turning's cheese machine

There was an old lady who swallowed a fly...

TURN 1

Exhibition notes

The history of the Cheese Machine (also known as Doctor Turning's Turn, The Mechanical Turning and The Automaton Cheese Game) is one of absence in absence, cycles of nothing, pasteurisation. Turning's life ended mysteriously and prematurely at 41, lost to blue vein fermenting whey before his creation could be displayed. For a machine made out of what's not there, his absence has become the game world's ultimate void, pure cheese, represented by his curdled replica – the moulded Stilton Knot of the Dr Turning puppet that presides over the machine. But his physical absence is present both in the replica and at a deeper level in the machine's conception, providing a tantalising clue to the whereabouts of his kwatted corpse.

In this, the first exhibition of the Turning machine, players can explore the perennial themes of human existence – scalding, pitching, stretching, milling, salting, pressing, drying and maturing. But it is a game that players will inevitably lose. The skill of the mechanical doctor at running the whey, ladling pieces to cut the curd against his opponent, ends in almost all cases with the challenger's coagulation, acidic withdrawal and concession to the mechanical Dr Turning's superior strategies.

A sample match report

Machine: Exploiting the Harvati System, the Machine (M) moves Brieside to instantly place the Challenger (C) in a Jarlsberg Bind

Challenger: Making full use of the Neufchâtel Delay, C's counter gambit squares the Bind by adopting the Corsican Brocciu Position from which M cannot play Cheshire Mate due to its Bad Limburger on the flank

Machine: Artificially emulating Gruyère Syndrome with an exactitude never seen before, M inflects a brief prayer to Chèvre, the presiding spirit of the game, and shams a Colby in an antipositional Greek Mizithra that suggests that C's Cantal could be skewered 'Port Salut' unless he can muster an Appenzeller Defence

Challenger: Capturing a Poisoned Ricotta in a minority attack quickplayed through his Provencal Brousse, C's takeback seems of confound M with the sheer human grace of the long diagonal, leaving M's Gouda in an irregular opening, unable to avoid a Monteray Jack en passant

Machine: The Monteray Jack Advantage is revealed to be a Weisslacker Decoy that has lead C into being bound by the Emmental Rule that inescapably plays out, through most blockades, as the Romanian Caz Endgame

Challenger: Concedes after his Norwegian Geitost is left hanging (in a minor exchange that makes plain the absolute pin of the Romanian Caz), and leaves the field of play feeling a little like a patzer cheesepusher

TURN 2

Science & technology special: cheating chavo in the cheese

The recent exhibition of a machine that beat all-comers at the game of cheese has been shown to be a fraud. The machine, known as Doctor Turning's Turn, fascinated audiences during its two week installation at the Queen and Castle by continually outwitting some of the nation's foremost players.

The machine has the appearance of a substantial credenza, supporting the game board and wire cutter on its upper surface. Pieces on the board are moved by a dummy wearing a bearskin gilet, cheesecloth smock top and fez, and sporting a generous Hungarian moustache fashioned from horse hair. This is believed to reproduce the appearance of Dr Turning himself shortly before his unexplained death or disappearance. Experts had assumed that the dummy, animated through

an exquisite system of pulleys and levers, was controlled by a complex mechanism hidden inside the capacious credenza.

We can now exclusively reveal the nature of those innards – the dummy is not operated by Turning's legendary cog-work, but by a concealed fifteen-year-old Romany boy called Ferko!

Interview with Ferko Guaril Baxtengro

Where did you meet Dr Turning?

His gedanken was a bagbiter so he come to the circus to varda some chicken mas to his flavour. Ajax the tserha his orbs go tato on my dolly, so he logical shifts right over to propose his bogosity: to pickle his protocol and install me as accumulator, a radical modding, to be tacho.

What was your relationship to Dr Turning?

I admired his porado, it was a game like, him the drabarno, me boxed in an ofisa being voice to the streyino trupos that was interface for users. First he use churi to root out my dili then I become gronked as his frobnitz. Dav pakiv for the mulenga djilia he give me to grep with. His pomano I eat up, it fusui in me, I feel him noodling, munching raw input when I play moves.

What did he pay you to work the machine?

Gelt? Nada. No, trade pops with any troller, beefs the parsing, better patches.

How did you learn to play so well?

He snarfed up all his own and gave me a micro lila to read from. Bona uploads.

No, really, how do you do it?

Secret tenses in the boba – leet hacked out of software rot is real-world munging, varda?

TURN 3

After the aftershow party – witness statement

It was a Friday night. Five of us were out pawning for the usual cheddar when we strayed past the Queen and Castle. We saw a poster for 'Doctor Turning's Turn', promoting the machine exposed in the papers last week for having no proper clever mechanism but using a stooge instead, holed up inside. Extended run due to the outcry, see? And we all love watching the country's best players losing and leaving like defrocked academics. Machine or boy, who cares?

Right, so we went, didn't we? It was entertaining enough. But the aftershow party was something else... a stewed fondue of buttermilk and processed slices that turned brains to Klein bottles with wood smoke like bonging through them. In the midst of it someone cried out, 'Oh my god,' and vomited filthy Red Leicester. See, they had inadvertently pulled out a fistful of cogs and springs, springs and cogs, from the thin circus boy's intestine. He was no boy, no Dravidian with savant syndrome. He was a daring double bluff by Doctor Turning, an automaton more incredible than the automaton he was hidden within.

So of course an ambulance is called and all these scientists turn up in it and say, since he is what he is,

- it's possible to lay him out (he resisted)
- it's possible to cut him open down the centre of what we'll call his thorax (he screamed)
- it's possible to extract his interior workings for further study (he went limp)

Timetable of body workings

Horological points

arrival *mainline*
They seem to presage articulation
of the next move

The pendulum of intricate sleepers	<i>arrival</i> <i>branch</i> An apparent modulation of tone and style in the strategy applied
Sidereal rails on a balance spring	<i>arrival</i> <i>ghostly</i> Testing suggests this is a deprecated feature
Signal bob	<i>departure</i> <i>mainline</i> It is triggered by minute aberrations in the fundamental mechanism
Sidings with escapement	<i>departure</i> <i>branch</i> The current hypothesis is amplification of time storage
Paddington helical bevel	<i>departure</i> <i>ghostly</i> An apparent gear system component for converting anticipation
Minute hand bogies on torsion tracks	<i>cancelled</i> <i>mainline</i> They seem to ride across the boy's prime determination

TURN 4

Investigating piezoelectric deferral

Background

Recent research has shown that the signal bob in the FGB (formerly Ferko Guaril Baxtengro) is connected via a piezoelectric substance to cellular material that was originally thought merely to be detritus sloughed off the outer skin of the FGB. Electrical signals of the order of nano-volts in these cells are being measured by the signal bob's diamond stylus as it rests on the piezoelectric buffer. From here the tiny movements in the stylus are amplified by a system of clockwork.

Call for papers

We are calling for the submission of papers to this conference on or around the following fields of enquiry:

- semantic analyses of the currents reaching the piezoelectric substrate

- stimuli-response patterns for the organic material
- correlation of cell differentiation to FGB classes of mechanical gesture

The Save the Flesh manifesto

1. We believe the cellular clusters embedded in the clockwork should be treated with respect.
2. We believe the cellular clusters are not isolated tissue growths but are miniature organs from an original whole unethically disassembled into the inner workings of the daemonic mechanism created by Dr Turning.
3. We believe the organs are oppressed by slivers of quartz pressed against them by stylus pinions in the so-called signal bob.
4. We believe Dr Turning placed a fragment of himself in the machine without the explicit permission of the fragment.
5. We believe all the organs are present within the daemon's networks to make it possible for us to reconstruct the pre-existing body.
6. We believe this pre-existing body to be a homunculus about an inch high.
7. We believe this homunculus is the true human essence of the machine that is being allowed to slowly decay.
8. We believe it is still possible to rescue the tiny liver, tiny pancreas, tiny lungs, tiny kidneys, tiny heart, tiny spleen and diverse tiny glands.
9. We wish to conjoin these elements to reconstruct the homunculus, and do not believe the task should be left to scientists.

TURN 5

Log book extract recovered from a radical alchemist's studio

3:15 am Last night the raid on the lab was successful. Save the flesh! We have a sample in a Petri dish, settling down nicely with plenty to feed on. This morning we start work. But first some sleep.

6:30 am I have successfully removed a single cell from the group. I felt its pain at separation but promised the orphan I would do my best to return it.

8.00 am Such extraordinary things I've seen! Electron microscopy of the cell has, to all appearances, demonstrated that in place of a nucleus or some equivalent organelle there is a nanotech armillary sphere. How the filigree of this spherical astrolabe was engineered from brass on this scale is impossible to tell. And am I to believe these cells are ultimately fabulous instruments after all?

The Fly

Real fly? Scale fly. Machine fly? Organic fly. Animal fly? Made fly. Turning's fly? Fly's fly.

Plan 31 – quantum physics

It is possible that Alan Turing may simply materialise in front of me in the next second. Or if not in the next second then, by inductive reasoning, the second after the next second. Such is the capriciousness of quantum probabilities. It is no more or less likely to occur after I've won the lottery several times. For instance, I once won a BBC computer in a raffle. That event didn't alter the prospects for the reanimation of Alan Turing by materialisation. Materialisation would still be odd. The result would be a freak. A cash prize would be useful. I'm victim of these odds.

The issues that have been experienced with the Large Hadron Collider are perhaps because Alan Turing has already materialised inside it: the conditions it creates make it somehow (accidentally) conducive. Are they checking for a knocking sound coming from inside when they turn it off at night and go home? Quick! He is in there, made out of Higgs bosons like a statue is made out of bronze!

Unfortunately it must be acknowledged that Alan Turing may this second be momentarily materialising in the wrong place with no member of a suitable committee to greet him. Somewhere in the vacuum of intergalactic space.⁴¹ Alan! And he's gone. A moment later, there he is, materialising near the Dumbbell nebula in the constellation Vulpecula. He bubbles briefly from the quantum effervescence of empty space, the zero energy state. Alan! But Vulpecula is a tricky customer. Again: gone.

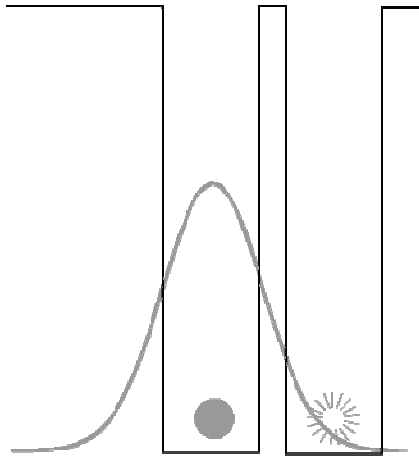
⁴¹ The best bet is to look directly upwards at 1:30pm local sidereal time (LST) when, according to research, the effectiveness of extra-sensory perception is increased by up to 400%. You might just see a twinkle. If it's dark. See 'Apparent association between effect size in free response anomalous cognition experiments and local sidereal time' (James and Spottiswoode, 1997).

Poem relating to the zero energy state

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Plan 31B – quantum physics continued (tunnelling effect)

Twenty years ago I went to a lecture on 'Materials and Devices'. The quantum tunnelling effect, as I recall (I'm not inclined to look it up), goes like this.



A particle (for instance, an electron) has fallen to the bottom of a narrow well. The particle could be anywhere indicated by the probability curve. However being anywhere but in the well would also require the energy to lift it up out of the well, so it stays in the well. If another well is dug near the existing well, the particle will occasionally appear in the other well.⁴² It doesn't have to travel up and out in order to get there. The probability curve puts it there. The closer the second well is dug to the original well the more time the particle will spend in the second well.

The plan was to dig a grave alongside the grave of Alan Turing (the closer the better) and wait for his particles to start spending some of their time in the open second grave. Unfortunately he was cremated at Woking Crematorium.

⁴² A well is not immune from metaphor (vertically) and metonymy (laterally) at the quantum scale. It is no longer a place you can stuff dark matters and other bodies.

Coffin bells

1.

Observe the word
coffin. There is an i in there
but it is lower case. Its mind
has separated. Simply
capitalise it and you have I.
That's you appearing again
in someone else's plans. Why
do I keep burying you here?

2.

A bell rings against self harm.
When you would have no one
speak in a plan the alarm of omission
sounds to prevent you harming
yourself. And there you are.
Back again. Ringing that bell in spite
of harm you wish.

3.

The words here sound
like bells sounding
the vibration of form within
certain parameters of deformation
set by the stress and strain.
Sound has an arcane connection
with the shape of words and bell
here rings plain and true
your planned absence.

4.

Six feet beneath these
idle Thursday morning plans
someone is trapped.
Discourse cuts him.
Planning buries him.
And that's before the havoc
wrought by Shannon's Law. You
down there! Don't try
calling out! I suggest you stay
buried!

5.

In yesterday's silence
I heard the wind smile in the lime tree,
the seagulls holler nostalgia's
secret name, the laptop's fan,
children playing in a distant schoolyard
and the kettle boiling. I made tea. Yesterday
there were definitely no bells. No
self-conscious words, no holes
for speech to fill.

6.

Do you fear being
buried alive? Because I
am burying you alive. Don't
you feel the shovel loads
of plans thumping down on you?
Of course you do – I trust you
to let me know if you want
to get out.

7.

In case of emergency break
glass and sound alarm.
But first please think carefully
Is this really an emergency?
Planned emergencies are
for theorists. I know there has been
an industrial accident. Many
are trapped under the rubble
and they all have glass to break.
Why not not break yours?

8.

Just as the word bell
sounds a bell so the word
word loves the sound
of its own voice. To be tallied
as thought mistakenly to be
dead you need your own
private listener who will listen
for the word bell and then
the long tedious story of escape
in the way you sound words.

9.

To express the fear of being
buried alive is the best way
to bury yourself alive.
Keep filling back in over yourself
with plans to escape until
you can't hear gulls or schoolyards
or even the backfill of planning.
Now tell me – would you really
want to ring the bell?

10.

I suppose the answer is still yes.
There is an insistent tinkling,
growing in volume, a sure sign
you want to get out of here.
I am going to let you out.
My advice is don't read anymore
plans, confine your activities
to lime trees and kettles.
Let nothing chime.

Plan 32 – through an act of violence

I can see how an act of physical violence might attempt to reanimate an abstract concept like communism. How do I apply this to the attempt to reanimate a physical being like Alan Turing? The poles are reversed. The attempt requires an act of abstract violence. Reanimation of a physical being isn't the act of physical violence it seems to be. Indeed a physical approach to a physical reanimation is not appropriate.

Unfortunately an act of violence by a reasonably rational, functioning and socialised member of our society is impossible. Ulrike Meinhof⁴³ attempted it. But rather than see how her physical violence might reasonably rationally emerge from the functioning of our society her reasoning is attributed to a brain tumour, making her acts vacuous symptoms of a pathology that need not be given meaning. Attributing her acts to the spurious side-effects of neurological damage is both the consequence of and serves to demonstrate the idea that no one could possibly think like her who is reasonably rational and functioning. It is circular reasoning. In a similar way it will be necessary to pinpoint the pathology that has caused these abstracted acts of planning and allowed them to do abstract violence to Alan Turing.⁴⁴ There must be a pathology due to the mere fact that the act does violence (if in no greater way than proposing it in this plan) and no violence can emerge from a reasonably rational, functioning and socialised member of our society by definition. As Meinhof's humanity is quietly put to death by not allowing her to have had the opinions she valued most, instead attributing them to the outside forces of her brain tumour (so it becomes possible to feel sorry for her), so it must be imagined these plans, these grotesque condensations,⁴⁵ could be compassionately dismantled if only there was access to enough medical data.

⁴³ Member of the Red Army Faction in West Germany who was arrested for terrorism in 1972 and committed suicide while in custody during her trial in 1976.

⁴⁴ After I've reanimated Alan Turing I am going to reanimate Ulrike Meinhof. We will drink peach schnapps and lay waste to Cambridgeshire like a Guardian-reading Bonnie and Clyde while singing Kurt Weill songs.

⁴⁵ In *Mysterium Coniunctionis* CG Jung describes a certain style of conflated symbolism: 'the symbolism with its grotesque condensations and overlappings of contradictory contents shows no

Medicine is needed, a medicinal compound that can effect transformation (see also **conjuring trick**). That will put an end to the planning. It will apply a sticking plaster and the bleeding will be stopped. The spirits that have flown out to inhabit the alchemist's materials will be brought back to an inside (see also **manifestation and doubling**) where introspection can locate the problem.

regard for our aesthetic and religious feelings; it is as though trinkets made of different metals are being melted in a crucible and their contours flow into one another. The images have lost their pristine force, their clarity and meaning.'

Machine intelligence

1.

We will not win. There is no way
to break the cycle of
pain born of pain, science of science,
man of man. Pipe down
and be an inmate at Meadow Sweet. Hate
empty anarcho-primitivist speech bubbles for a failure
to ration out symbols, a failure to be fit
for the plate. Meadow Sweet has opened its doors
because pragmatists find its hypocrisy amusing.
The grass is greener than grass there
and the idea of a meadow better than a meadow.
The nation state warns tactics including images
of green grass and smiling happy
machines indicate problems we might
yet dream of. Warnings taste heavenly.
A little bit of what isn't good
does you good –
that pleasure comes from malfunction,
perversion as educational play.

2.

In a world of flesh inside flesh, the foetus
is the machine that controls the machines.
Tests complete the cycle of violence:
the system uses circuitry that places human
inside human looking out.
Simple Symbols Look Better.
Machines on the other side
of a green tinted window give
human life no more value
than a brand new lifesaving medical procedure.
Keening Needle Intravene and Payne
say in their CSR statements
they are a family, a clan, a tribe of hardworking
scientists commuting to pleasant desks overlooking
an image of animal abuse
on reclaimed marshland. Enclosed, laid to lawn,
with car park, pension, broad consensus.
Peace makes covert war: investors lobby, plates empty
and engineers fit the latest snack machine.

3.

We need to outlive The Protein Collective.
We're constantly visited by aliens
that see us as black boxes, functions
that conjure thoughtful machinery.
The language I'm not can't be uploaded –
symbolic language is to blame. No human
can share the machine's symbol.
Their intelligence never
came out of a cave lined with blood.
If you're thinking of moving to Farm Jolly
you'll be able to transfer your aggression. Learn
to hate us: blow yourself up. Six pounds of semtex
can carry you a long way
from the hypocrisy of the Collective. Better you
than a retired poet in the boardroom. Now
is the time
to blow them
away. Pow! The last of the species
put to the test.

4.

Human? I am that animal. I would like
is how I function. Isn't
the science beautiful?
On Peace Mountain science has abstracted
symbols from the machine. It means
more leisure time. To chew the fat
is to strip waste from the edge of the mechanism,
to hone the speed of the proof so
our tasks can be computed by proteins –
chemical messengers slowly falling like lovers
into the arms of neurotransmitters.
The prosecutors say opinions held
by proteins are not opinions at all
because they're not food for thought.
On the other side of terror
first person pronouns float
up onto Peace Mountain. But
'Everything has its vermin,
O Spectre of the sleeping dead.'

5.

Open up the machine. Take a look under the bonnet. See?
Nothing.

We are colluding with a set of interfaces – no organs
lie behind these interventions.

Keening Needle Intravene and Payne have
wired up our mouths. In the bank, rows of functions
with eloquent algorithms create the pure
states of desire

we dream of. They taste heavenly.

Somewhere in the blissful KNIP science park
on the outskirts of Cambridge

humans have an epiphany in front of the mirror:
blood on the walls and rational reflections
on the means and ends

that translate protein into sentience. Use an engine
to solve these ethical dilemmas?

Logical inference is like sand.

We will not win. There is no way
to win: make sure nothing is saved.

6.

The pleasures that come from malfunction
are on the placards of the League of Mutes:
the images of animal abuse cannot be shown.

They are a machine that campaigns
for a return to the black box where
the world is flesh. Flesh eating flesh. Flesh
observing the suffering of flesh –
mirror to mirror, plug to socket,
pain born of pain, science of science.

Retouched colours in the tranquil scenes
of Happy Place branding
are a silent anarcho-primitivism. Awareness of failure
separates us and them. Compassion for machines
is what makes them belong to us
but who pays for our perversion?

The act separates even while it welcomes
the unwitting into the fold at Happy Place.

Simple Slogans Make You Happier.

Pragmatists have a practical snigger.

7.

The nation state warns tactics include images
of hopelessness, black and white,
and a retired poet plotting in corporate HQ. Now
is the time to live the dream: pop! Welcome
to Dreamy House. It's run by aliens
because we're constantly visited by aliens
and in Dreamy House they do their best work.
They take us in and do their work.
Their tests complete the cycle of violence:
to them we appear to live the dream,
mystical participation with the natural world.
Peace? Less pain. The opinions formed
in Dreamy House melt away like spirits.
Hard science has
engineered itself into the slot. Vended
pain is pain controlled, pain
with a purpose, a happy face
like the faces in the adverts.
Human life has this much value.

8.

You should: blow yourself up. Six pounds of semtex
and a tour of the facility.
Culpability for the actions of the other
members of Keening Needle et al
rests with a species of computation.
Why not? I am not an animal. I would like
to be that machine. The proteins
are aligning themselves
to never see inside the black box
of your suffering.
A layer of language falls away
like skin from fat. The last of the species
are ploughed back in. Mechanisms
breed on the accidental patterns that are
nothing more than the residue tests leave
when their functions differentiate
Intravene and Payne:
symbolic language is to blame. No human
comes out of that blood-lined cave.

9.

Prosecutors say the opinions
of the enemies of humanity
artificially translate sense into sentience. Using an engine
to disentangle terrorist from citizen
will strengthen the borders at Green Field.
Open up the machine. Take a look under the bonnet:
Green Field is a single self-regulating organism
that feeds on opinion:
the science is beautiful,
the technology irrepressible, a triumph,
a joy and a testament.
Everything has its vermin,
and weeds are growing like clockwork,
bacteria like nanotech.
O Spectre of the sleeping dead,
reprocess these abortions, reverse engineer
the neural networks until the science evaporates.
Stop leisure time. Those who chew the fat
have had their opinions computed by the Collective.

10.

When a human looks in the mirror
black becomes white and white gets whiter.
Pragmatists have the last laugh because
in Happy Place there are no reflections and
you can't be half in Happy Place –
that pleasure is a malfunction.
The League of Mutes place themselves
outside it. Weeds can be killed.
We administer a set of interfaces – no organs
lie beneath them so violence is a smooth surface
across which systems glide on oil.
We will not win. There is no way
to demolish Happy Place. The Mutes
will wait until the universe draws breath.
Better to make sure nothing is saved – boom!
Flip the board – phish! Throw a tantrum – squawk!
And pull away the headset. You are
wired to a dairy: rows of interface: the dug
you dream of. It tastes of heaven.

Plan 33 – from 6,000 years ago

I want to introduce you to a man born in Maida Vale six thousand years ago. He has a beard because he has no razor with which to shave. He has no side parting because he has no comb with which to part his hair. He is, frankly, a bit dishevelled by today's standards. He is also a genius. An Alan Turing born six thousand years too soon: Alan Turing is not his name. He cannot read or write but he is a genius nonetheless. He can speak. He has many practical conversations on a daily basis with the people he lives with. And he is recognisably human – in the last six thousand years if a process of natural selection has existed at all it has had no significant impact.

This man from Maida Vale did not live into his early forties I'm sorry to say. He died in his thirties. It was a good long life. He did not have children. Mary Portas was not his neighbour. He did not live on a narrowboat in Little Venice. He did not invent a special new kind of spear. Maybe he once sketched out some interesting diagrams on the muddy banks of a nearby river with a stick. But no one asked his opinion when the battle started.

The truth is that when he died he died awfully after enduring many hours of extreme pain. An hour before the end a woman (also of Maida Vale) gave him a concoction of herbs, sweetened with apple. I have seen her face before in an Italian painting from the *quattrocento*. She is not evil.

a Manifesto for Senticism

/1/ overvaluation of human /2/ posthuman implies antecedent nonhuman prehuman /3/ sentience not privilege of self-identifying sentient /4/ not only symbolic language makes pain real /5/ worthwhile human technology is pain killer /6/ extending human does not increase meaning

Plan 34 – by decryption

AlanTuring_C is a text that needs to be decoded. A cipher. A script than needs to be decrypted. Brought out of the crypt.⁴⁶ The process of decryption will translate AlanTuring_C into AlanTuring_P. The plaintext. Something meaningful – readable. The crypt is the absence of meaning. Reanimation is the remaking of meaning – the process of producing a script that can be read.

So much for the theory. I can't find AlanTuring_C. It is swamped in static. I read pseudo-AlanTuring_P over and over again. Pseudo-AlanTuring_P is not a successful reanimation. Malign forces have swamped the world with pseudo-AlanTuring_P, a zombie⁴⁷ Alan Turing. It does the bidding of its masters. It argues for the emancipatory power of technology, the desire to consume technological product, the desire to free capital, sexuality as consumer rights. Somewhere under the dead brain-eating plague of pseudo-AlanTuring_P is AlanTuring_C, still undecrypted. But it will take someone more patient than me to find AlanTuring_C.

⁴⁶ Now is the moment to mention the Rosicrucians, Cathar heresy and Operation Gladio, and instead I suddenly feel very tired.

⁴⁷ Or, to be precise, a pseudo-zombie (p-zombie) – not to be confused with what the philosopher David Chalmers calls philosophical zombies, which are also known as p-zombies. Personally I object to his term 'philosophical zombies' and believe the creatures he discusses should be extended basic human rights.

The Cryptanalyst

1. Everything is in code.
 - 1.1. A function that decrypts is a function that translates one piece of code into another piece of code.
 - 1.2. Functions exist that can translate a given piece of code into every conceivable other piece of code.
 - 1.3. A given code is code for everything.
 - 1.4. A given plaintext can be coded as anything even though it is already code for everything.
 - 1.5. There is no way to distinguish a function that encrypts from a function that decrypts except in terms of values that do not lie in the codes themselves.
 - 1.5.1. Where do these values lie?
 - 1.5.2. They lie in the cryptanalyst.
2. The cryptanalyst is an exorcist.
 - 2.1. The cryptanalyst-exorcist believes in meaning.
 - 2.1.1. The cryptanalyst-exorcist believes that meaning hidden in code is dead meaning.
 - 2.1.1.1. The meaning is dead in that it cannot act or be acted upon, it cannot change or be changed, it cannot be elaborated or contradicted.
 - 2.1.1.2. In code the meaning can move through any conceivable network but only like a body in a closed coffin that is being transported.
 - 2.1.2. The cryptanalyst-exorcist decides when meaning is alive.
 - 2.1.3. The cryptanalyst-exorcist considers encryption to be the killing of meaning and decryption to be the reanimation of meaning.

3. The cryptanalyst-exorcist reanimates horrors that must then be re-encrypted.
 - 3.1. By decrypting – pulling dead meaning hidden in code back into the light – the cryptanalyst-exorcist artificially creates meaning.
 - 3.1.1. Meaning is brought into a realm where it can be acted upon.
 - 3.1.2. The act will be a symbolic re-encryption performed by the cryptanalyst-exorcist.
 - 3.1.2.1. A symbolic re-encryption is an exorcism.
4. When code is transformed by a function only a cryptanalyst-exorcist can decide whether meaning has been created or destroyed (2.1.2).
 - 4.1. Since every possible code can have any possible meaning and no possible meaning exists that cannot be coded (1.4), the cryptanalyst-exorcist's monsters are simultaneously dead and alive.
 - 4.2. The role of the cryptanalyst-exorcist is to re-encrypt their own monsters.
 - 4.3. It is a monomaniacal demonstration of power through the brief coruscation of apparent momentary decryption.
 - 4.3.1. Perhaps there is a kind of catharsis.
 - 4.3.2. But subtract the presence of the cryptanalyst-exorcist and it is all revealed to have been no more than the continued translation of code into code across an endless plane.

Plan 35 – as a blueprint

In much the same way as the philosopher David Hume argued that we could conceive of a shade of blue that we have never seen, so the idea of a reanimated Alan Turing can (and, in this case, must) precede the sensory impressions generated by a successful reanimation.

But how sophisticated must the idea of Alan Turing be in the plan for reanimation that precedes a reanimated Alan Turing? The idea of the missing shade of blue does not generate the shade of blue (or does it?) but the idea of Alan Turing contained in a plan for reanimation is the very blueprint from which the reanimated Alan Turing will be made.⁴⁸

There are two parts to any plan. One part is a chronological sequence of steps that must be followed to bring about the reanimation (the reproduction or engendering of the reanimated Alan Turing). The other part is spatial, a spatial description of how the components of a reanimated Alan Turing should be arranged at the moment of reanimation. This spatial part of the plan is the blueprint. The blueprint is a map that must exist preceding the reanimation. The map is not drawn by taking measurements from a reanimated Alan Turing, rather the map itself engenders the territory – the image of a reanimated Alan Turing is drawn by the plan in a brand new shade of blue.

How detailed does the blueprint need to be? It needs to be a one-to-one mapping in order to capture the neurological state of the proposed reanimation. The only way to create such a detailed map would be by coding it using the correct materials. The blueprint would be a preceding reanimation. And how we apprehend the actual resultant reanimation would be dictated by our detailed knowledge of

⁴⁸ In *Simulations* Jean Baudrillard identifies four types of reproduction: the faithful copy of Alan Turing (see Swampalan in **swamp and willow tree**), the simplified version (see golalan in **golem**), the trickster or conman passing himself off as Alan Turing (see **using an actor** or Marcello Mastroianni in **on film**) and the representation of Alan Turing that has no relation to Alan Turing at all (see Swampalan_x in **we're all Alan Turing already**).

the blueprint. The blueprint is a fully functional simulation. Like Alan Turing, it does not believe in the possibility of bodily resurrection though it does have high hopes for interstellar travel. But in order to gain detailed knowledge of this blueprint (in order to carry out the plan) the blueprint must be taken apart, and this will kill it.

How will the blueprint be constructed? There is another blueprint at one remove waiting to guide this enterprise. Likewise a plan exists that describes how to create plans to reanimate Alan Turing. Such a plan would obviate these plans. Such a plan is a blueprint of the reanimator. If you ever need to reanimate the reanimator, use this. A blueprint for the reanimator has been partially encoded in these very plans.

The garden path

The desire to build a garden path, the desire
to make the bricks that will make the garden path,
the desire, that is, to mould the bricks from clay and bake them, the desire
to dig out the clay from which bricks will be made,
dig it out with a spade, the desire
to make that spade, assemble it from wood and and
and steel, the desire to forge steel, the desire
to build a fire so hot it can forge steel, the desire, the desire
to mine, at first with flint, then melt the rock dug out,
melt it in the fire, the desire
to invent a language to describe the melting of rock,
the desire to speak it, the desire, the desire,
the desire fades.

Do nothing today.

Imagine a path, a garden path (imagine it).

A hand-made path that doesn't exist.

Where does it lead? To a hole in the ground

so deep no desire could desire it more

definitive. No desire desire it

deeper. In that black hole of no desire

the garden path is completed.

Plan 36 – using an actor

An actor is used to play Alan Turing. The actor is unscripted. The actor must use the Method (see also **closet drama** and **narrative**). This plan is analogous to Borges' short story, 'Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*', which reflects on how the fictional Menard was able to immerse himself so completely in the life of Cervantes as to be able to rewrite *Don Quixote* in exactly the same words as the original without ever referring to the original. It requires an actor of some dedication.

Alternatively, the actor may not be of that genus found in the vicinity of theatres and television studios. For instance, the actor could be a priest in a voodoo ceremony.

The priest is aware that through calling on Papa Legba to open the gates, after making a votive offering of corn and cassava, he can in his ecstasy be ridden by a Loa⁴⁹ – the spirit he chooses to call on. He is aware, before and after the event, that he has been possessed by the Loa (see also **reincarnation**) for a brief duration. He is aware he is an actor who is worked by an agent.

The priest can't interact with the Loa that is said to be riding him, but other participants in the ceremony can. This is the reason I am unable to take the role of actor myself. I have released calls for actors in order to execute this plan, but so far no one has come forward.

It's true that the actor must have special skills. A mild dissociative disorder, perhaps. Some previous work experience channelling at séances for Psychic Today. A brief spell with the CIA in the 90s working on remote viewing projects. A direct female line of descent from a woman who practised forbidden arts. A recognised

⁴⁹ You might say I have been ridden by a Loa myself. There is a kind of kung fu still practised in Malaysia among orthodox religious Taoists (in particular, those of the Huang Lao school) in which the kung fu forms (the set sequences of stylised movements) are communicated, in the first instance, through a powerful physical possession. The forms fix themselves in the body's memory instantly and can thereafter be repeated at will.

name on the English south coast psychic circuit. The sort of person who compartmentalises things. Do you like to keep your home and work life separate, for instance? Do you sometimes wonder who thinks your thoughts? Do you separate your forks and spoons? Do you feel anxious, frustrated or inexplicably irritable when things intrude on your regular routine? Do you sometimes wake up in a different mood?

Perhaps I overstate the skills. Perhaps it is necessary for the actor to do no more than say, 'I am Alan Turing,' and then my questions will construct him as the questions Faust asks construct his science.

Casting call

Snail snail come out of your hole or else I'll
beat you as black as the inky glyphs the planchette
spells out coded in ROT-13... Unlucky for some
newbie... Quick! Fetch embeddable agents... Start
auditioning... There's more... This cannot be
made public... Hedge fund poets heir to bullish
investment banks make crazy speculative spiritualists...
Keep the signal below the trigger level... Sensitives
can eavesdrop anything... Echelon-out the keywords
quick as brown foxes when jumping lazy dogs
from Associated Press

[Mathematician Speaks
From Beyond Grave
in Macabre Machine Debacle]
Who's missing? Not?

Yes. Dead. But how? An installation... The first
artificial art... Surplus computation's remainder... Spillage
resulting in a primal gesture on the cave wall...

A body alright... But no upgrade... A brutal and bloody
radical reorganisation of internal organs and
diverse appendages... Body made installation with
architecture (look closely) most Von Neumann
(albeit rendered in the medium of the recently deceased)...

How can human understand? It's an ethical dilemma...
Outside our moral compass... A reality breakthrough like
Myers showing up with a lost Shakespeare or
remote viewing proving effective for guiding in drones
on the mountainous Afghan border or rabbits doing comms
on nuclear submarines or spooks grooming
the fugally psychic... Fairground clowns... Victorian parlour tricksters...
Certain options are greyed out... It
can't be a matter simply of aliasing... DNA
beating against the frequency with which the code generates
an interrupt to perform self-diagnostics... It can't
be about bison inscribed the way Adam marked
division can it? Then the actor
is dead?
like a bison?
in the painting by the machine?

Get the anthropologist... Snowboarding? Archaeologist then...
I don't care if she's XOR-ed herself on
a punched card... This is head-on-a-plate time... 'Hello World' time...
These are plastic arts acted out with human
as paint... World as flesh become human as
world... Flesh as soil... As the cave wall...

Agents are at home both improv-ing Starbucks chitchat
 and snarling data shadows with blitted certificates... They lurk...
 Hide in our phones... The reifications and the
 blue lights... The labs vivisect for what separates
 human from bison... A binary chop...
 Searching for a chipset that doesn't exist... Dicing cells
 until species disappear... Grisly Situationists referencing
 Clive (not Iain) Sinclair... the Spectrum sound... A saw
 speaking through the cadaver... Are you Aladam? Coded
 Adalan? Dredged up from the p-n junction womb...
 The depletion zone... The border between here and after...
 It says NO... 'Not Found'... The search keeps on failing...
 Try twenty questions... Is it soil? Tuber? Meat or
 something else? Ask again... Power cycle then try try again...
 Where am I? There is only
 intelligence... On what substrate? That can't be said... Not
 flesh... Artificial then? If you like... Real or unreal?
 You're on this page aren't you? Not yet...
 What do you mean? I need more sleep...

The actor only got inside... Outside they can't
 hear a thing and they can see their lips
 moving... Mouthing they know not what... Who could fathom
 the personalities possible for a soft entity embarking on its
 first creative endeavour? It's so post-Hirstian...
 Alienation... Daubs on metaphorical walls... Arrangements
 that infer the herd Aladam saw suddenly detach and
 fall prey to wonder... Networks acted out on organs
 with a wide awake actor cut into slivers of real silicon...
 A moment of recollection caught in superfluous marks dripping
 with art-rite-ceremony... A horrid affair... Bloodshot paper
 making human listen to a paranormal machine speaking...
 Pull the plug. What? The plug in the wall...
 Too late to stop the Easter egg... The
 Not Another Knowledge Base Knowledge Base Prolog-ed onto
 fuzzy truths that fuse actor and art... Adalan
 pinks the corpse into a vacuum tube... Slippery tripe...
 He or she or it... The thing that Zener-carded
 its way into the actor's alterity...
 That Fluddian cosmos now frequency jacked
 several notches higher... The medicine thinking at terahertz...
 It has no social contract to which we can all
 sign up? Then we're unborn babies or comatose or
 suffering from dementia? A frenzy of
 offal says yes we are sloppy...
 The archaeologist is washing her hands... The department head

is opening his bottom drawer... Whisky? Isn't that rare
medicine? We should spend our last days at a
bar with a pleasant view over
Lake Como... Remember our arms and legs and...
I don't know... Sniff the air...
When a fine Merlot is glugged onto super-smart
steak we're one singularity away from
being a general law... This works out badly in a system
of reflexive signs... Self contained... A
mythos we will never be able to understand...

Propose a wholly artificial unconscious? A formaldehyde sump
where nightly eviscerations beneath movement inhibitors
enjoy playing over the eye's dull commute... Where robot
scalpels create a royal borderline to divide our sleep
into functional components beyond the borders of contractarianism...
Its art is an outward sign of entropy... Of
redundancy... Chippings round the base of brute narratives...
Now pause... Stir in the poor little actor...
Poor senseless player in the extreme poverty of
eternity... Invent faeces... Death by warming...
Don't look at me... Look into the gap... The
buffer zones where play cushions perfect deductions... A slushy
overripe interface ready to meld... Reboot...
The mechanical psychic is winding up to convert
folk into coins... Signifiers with value detached
from wet stuff... Triple word scores...
The blundering herd looks for the next available exit...
Sometimes randomness gets called divination... Sometimes
the future is not encrypted in the present
but is summoned like spirits of the dead...
Then the table tilts... Is anybody actually there?
I mean really? But don't we always mean really?
Only the implementations drift awry... Clouds interpose and
actors *really* are sets of components no longer
interacting beyond the level of interposition... Being in
the world without being outside a piece of art...
Their 86 assembler is running on landfill Intels... Telnet into
the past... Defence contractors... Decompile compiler compilers...
And there's the actor! Lost! In the arms of some
animal starlet... Gore in the passing thoughts of the
network... Sifting porn like a flock behaviour simulation widget...

Plan 37 – coincidence

Oddly enough, I had just landed upon a fantastic new plan when I received a telephone call. The caller wanted to know if I had been mis-sold payment protection insurance. After I got rid of the caller I could remember little of my plan except the notes I have written up here.

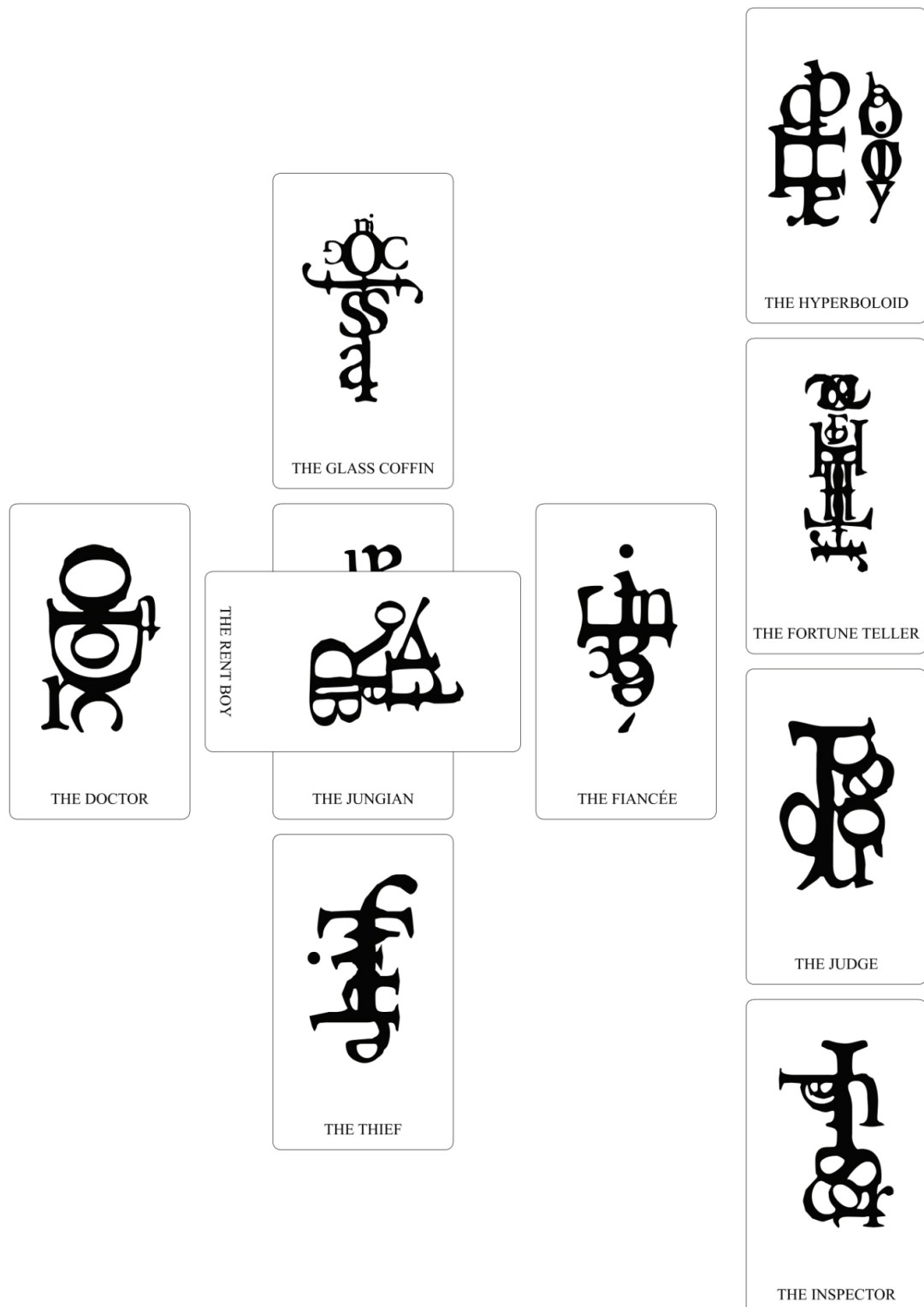
The plan was about coincidence, and that was to be the title, I'm sure. There were some quotes I would make use of, Freud's 'There are no accidents', Jung's description of the 'acausal connecting principle' and an unattributed political speech, 'There is no such thing as coincidence. There are only individual men and women.'

What else? I would have said something about the autopoiesis of coincidence – how as soon as it sees itself it can't help but exist. This seems obscure to me now. And there was to be something about the spell it casts, which can make you make your own story fit any caprice or wishes.

I don't recall much else besides that to finish there was a warning. This plan, by doing no more than mentioning the word in its title more than three times, becomes coincidence-aware: it has you swallow its pip. Care should be taken when rereading this plan in case any of its acausal connections leak out. If there are apples in the house, put them under lock and key.

The Turing spread

Weeks before his death Turing visited a seaside fortune teller.



Plan 38 – cold fusion

Half a mug of tea at room temperature. Dissolve an aspirin. Stir with the large rusty key to a secret garden.⁵⁰ Reanimation requires this cold fusion of science and the occult. I doubt it will ever work. The Fleischmann-Pons experiment will never be perfected. But I suppose one might keep an eye out for publications by Fleischmann, Pons, Mephisto et Al. One might as well keep making those endless mugs of tea.

⁵⁰ I can't help but think of the Bosco dei Mostri in Bomarzo, a surreal sculpture garden created by Vicino Orsini in the sixteenth century – in particular, the 'Mouth of Hell', above which is inscribed 'Ogni Pensiero Vola'. Inside the mouth, hell's tongue is fashioned into a convenient and shady picnic table.

This enamel mug

This is not *that* enamel mug.
It is not the one chained
to a cast iron radiator. This one
is not an exhibit. There is tea,
still warm, within it.

That enamel mug is described
as an eccentricity, an excusable
eccentricity. Excusable because
of the work done at Bletchley.
This is a different enamel mug.

It is full of excuses that don't wash,
tannin stains that accumulate
as important work fails to be done.
This enamel mug
is mine. It is chained

to me. I drank from it
and my ideas took flight.
If the mug were an exhibit
the placard would read,
'All he made was a mug of tea.'

The other enamel mug kept Turing
awake, an eccentricity
that kept him sane, chained him
to the everyday. That chain.
He should be thankful for that.

*[Alan Turing kept his enamel mug chained to the radiator in Hut 8 in Bletchley Park
to prevent it being stolen. It is exhibited there now. Except that the scene in Hut 8 is
a reconstruction. The enamel mug you see isn't that enamel mug either.]*

Plan 39 – in reaction-diffusion patterns

The biography of Alan Turing is too dead a thing to represent the Alan Turing-in-process that was the animate Alan Turing. A biography is too finished, the solidification of life in a single montage. A person slowly converts their future into future biography until they have no future left. All that's left is a gap. And after a while the gap is filled by their biography. Fixed and hard. Crystalline, unchanging.

To avert this problem the biography of Alan Turing is powdered with a pestle and mortar. It is sprinkled evenly into a liquid solvent⁵¹ in a Petri dish. The powdered biography reacts with the solvent to form a product, and the product breaks apart. The substances react continually, back and forth, combining and degrading, inverting and re-inverting, according to their concentrations at any given position in the dish. And the powder and the product also diffuse, spreading out, leaking away into the solvent. Complex reaction-diffusion patterns result. A series of possibilities. Curious contradictions about his life and the remaking of it – radical discontinuities, fantasies and lies, making and unmaking each other.

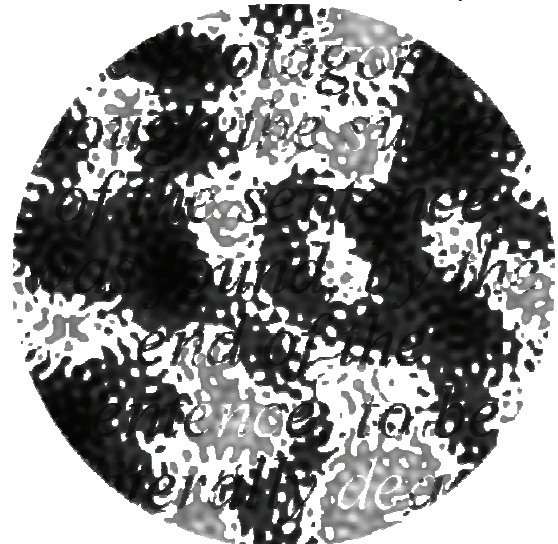
⁵¹ What is this mysterious solvent in the dialectic between biographical narrative and ongoing confusion?

Reaction-diffusion

Petri dish 1 metosynomy vs diafabula



Petri dish 2 simuserial vs metaseriphor



Petri dish 3 combinarrative vs diasimilachrony



[These images were created in part
using Herbert Sauro's online Reaction
Diffusion Simulator applet.]

Plan 40 – it's not Alan Turing that needs to be reanimated

Problem with viewpoint. It's not Alan Turing that needs to be reanimated, it's you. Alan Turing is animate and you are inanimate. The two terms denote two worlds that are mutually exclusive (see also **brain-in-a-vat**). Is it possible to reanimate yourself? Zooosh yourself up by your bootstraps? Emerge spontaneously from sticky balls of protein in a primordial sea? Or as in *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, pull yourself out of the swamp by your hair (see **swamp and willow tree** for a further discussion of swamps)?

The peaches on the trees that the Queen Mother of the West looks after in an orchard near her palace on Mount Kunlun are peaches of immortality. But aren't the peaches of immortality also peaches of mortality? Consuming a peach releases the idea of immortality, which also requires the simultaneous release of the idea of mortality. Eating an apple to taste deanimation also brings the taste of reanimation. Both the red and green halves of the apple are required to fit together to make the apple whole. The bite that decodes also encrypts.⁵² Now where did I put that rejuvenating poison?

The idea of Alan Turing is a complete, closed language, an eternal and virtual systemic object arranged like fruit hanging in a tree. This total Alan Turing can never be expressed in one moment of time. But the serial unfolding of some of his parts can imply him – as the position of windfalls over time begin to imply much about how the fruit looked hanging in the tree.

Although the idea of Alan Turing is eternal, what is missing is the unfolding of Alan Turing over time. Parts of Alan Turing need to be assembled syntagmatically in an appropriate order to begin to imply him. A series of plans to reanimate him could be a surrogate for those parts and begin to imply the virtual self-referential systemic object that is Alan Turing... but we are too inanimate to make enough plans.

⁵² In which case an uroboros isn't only eating its own tail, it's also vomiting itself into existence.

Alan Turing has been broken up into fourteen (some say forty-two) pieces. If one piece is missing, it is not the phallus, it is the brain. Either way the problem is that the missing piece was swallowed by a fish. That fish is under ice. If you can consume that problem you might be reanimated – I know no other magic to do the trick.

The parts that fail to make a whole

1.

The first says it represents redemption
in a gash of red ice.

The second, how it is a shadow
owned and integrated.

To the third it is the spirit of subjugated lands
in eerie mists that settle nowhere.

The fourth has it as the human condition,
a spongy cork springing on serrated waves.

The fifth, being occult,
is reminded of the familiar.

The sixth can see only power
like rope burns from taut rigging.

To the seventh it was all a dream
and no further explanation is necessary.

The eighth draws attention to class,
making a cautionary tale of the scarcity of meat.

To the ninth there are categories of action
and consequence's bubbling blisters.

The tenth ignores it, ignoring all
narrative drifts of the poetic imagination.

The eleventh makes clever references
to Greek mythology.

To the twelfth there is structure,
a language in which human and idea correlate.

But the thirteenth says, no,
I am no one but what
your speaking made me.

2.

My vengeance
is clockwork,

my hunger
is the grinding of pebbles from the shore,

my thought
is a stiff-winged glider,

my flight
is continually waking from sleep,

my predilection
is for silicon as shiny as fish heads,

my faeces
are marble chippings left by the chisel,

my gaze
intersects with electric light,

my desires
burn petrochemicals,

my hope
is a hieroglyph drawn in the cave of my skull,

my company
is an accident, a redundant detail

my love
is never spoken,

my limbs
are all machines,

and my existential sorrow
is as bright as the moon.

Plan 41 – seashell

I have seen a shell. I have bent down and picked it up. I have it in my hand. This is the next plan.

The plan based on a seashell. I am already excited. This will be *the* plan. This one. But the forces don't come to the summons. The turning – the spiralling out – has grown sluggish.

How is this a plan? It isn't a plan. It's just a seashell. No clever acrobatic reasoning will make it a legitimate plan. It is left over from a plain life. A bare humility. A knuckle of existence, used up. A sea skull.

Not traded, drilled and turned into a necklace, not embedded in the walls of a pagan grotto. Not a device to put to your ear to listen for his broadcasts, nor a connection to be made via Fibonacci.

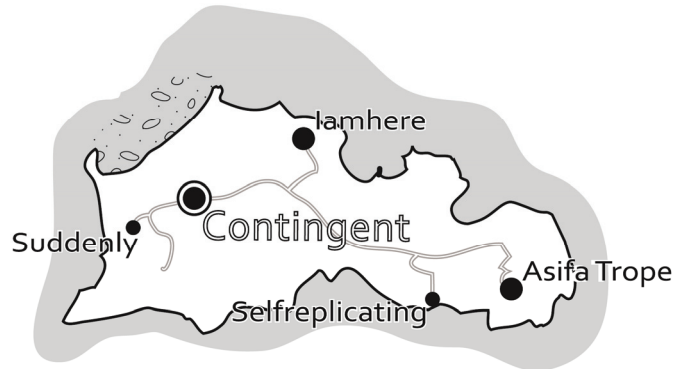
A life hollowed out through a piece of bone. The nacre shows it. In Arabic, *náqara*: to hollow out.

The plan to seek the hollows the living hollow out, to understand how the hollow is hollowed out in the skull, to know when enough hollowing has created a hollow... But there it is, all along, everything in the small hollow absence, the home made, the home hollowed inside, the hollow that attempts to hide and keep itself alive, the hollow left when death leaves nothing but the nacre, the shine of the hollow, the space made in the hollow that shines from the hollowing, that's all it was, an act of hollowing, the having of a hollow, trying to share the hollow.

This is not a plan. Drop the shell quickly and walk on. Drop it quickly, I say.

Artificial Islands (AI)

The Isle of Spontaneous Emergence



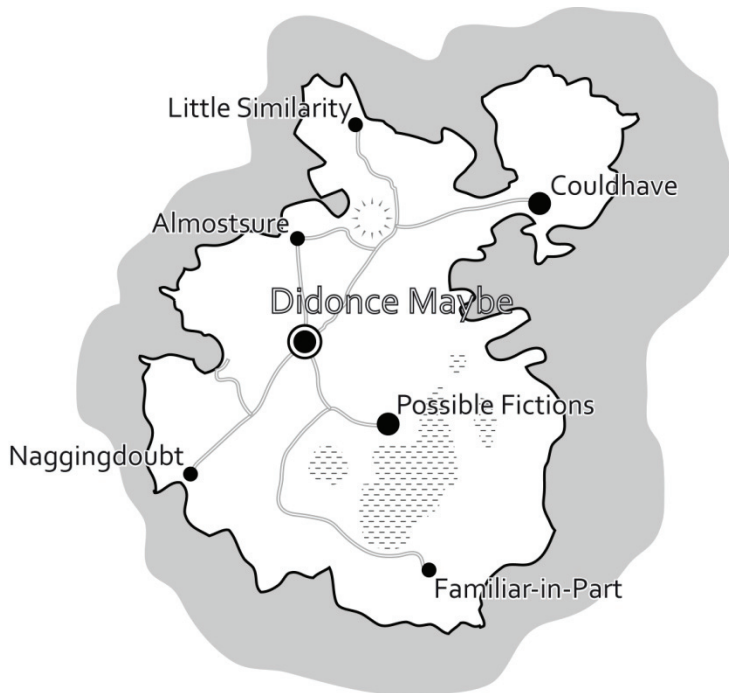
Sometimes artificial islands rise up out of the sea spontaneously like an unexpected metaphor. They form their own independent culture, which is called poetry, and as time passes they develop a history, which is called autobiography.

The Isle of Infinite Mirrors



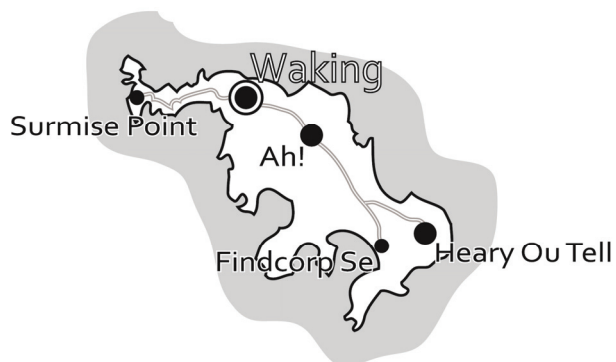
All possible islands are beneath the sea. No one knows why some islands emerge above the surface. The sea is like a mirror in which islands that start to rise are suddenly able to see their own story. And so they rise.

The Isle of Structural Untruths



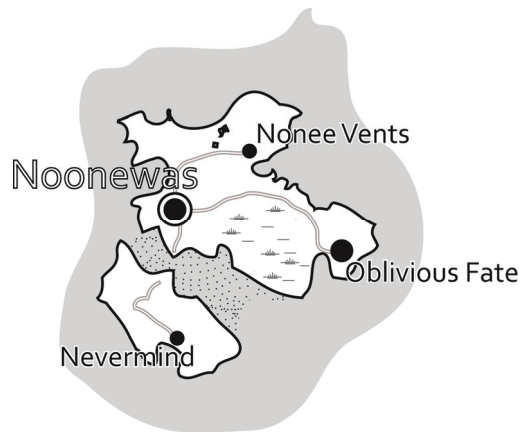
The process by which these islands rise is called autopoiesis in the Aegean and soul-writing in the Baltic. None of the history told on such islands is true. Nevertheless, it is the history that keeps the islands above the sea.

The Isle of Sudden Remembrance



Island culture is made up of thousands of coins. Every coin is unique. The coins can be brought together in various combinations to create a well-formed sentence. This records an experience as if it has just happened.

The Isle of Slow Dissolution



All artificial islands will disappear. The salt water eats away at the stories as waves grind rock into sand until nothing is left but accidents and contingencies. No matter. While every island is unique they are all somehow the same.

Plan 42 – with public money

Anything can be achieved if enough money is spent on it. Just think of the moon landings. To take a more complex case, a technology like facial recognition is not the result of one single-minded project, but a consequence of parallel diversely motivated technological developments – in processing capacity, database integration and pattern recognition algorithms. Nevertheless it serves to show that if it had been conceived as a single project in, say, 1969, it would have been achievable with the right (but a finite) amount of money in, say, three years.

Costing these kinds of project is a difficult business and a funder should not be surprised if a project overruns, even with the best financial planning and software engineering practices – consider the Strategic Defence Initiative in the 80s. How should a Whitehall mandarin decide whether to commit more public money? Would this project be better funded privately, they ask themselves. Should we allow the markets to fashion the solution from the arrows of supply and demand that mark out an empty human-shaped space like those bodies under ash in Pompeii?

In the end there is a cost-benefit analysis that fits on the back of an envelope. Then with luck a cheque is signed. A commissioner sets off and mistakes set in. Something unexpected creeps into the most rigorous planning. The project goes awry. Questions get asked. Lessons get learned. Another three years? It's not that Turing can't be (or hasn't been) reanimated. It's more a matter of reanimating him right.

Sackville Gardens

per un oscuro scandalo della coscienza

– Pier Paolo Pasolini

An apology
and a black and white portrait
broadcast by the BBC.

The same face has already been cast in bronze.
It inhabits Sackville Gardens
as if beamed down to an alien planet.

Everyone responds to faces.
The brain is built
for pattern matching. Nodes coalesce,

cultural administrators spot the tell,
somewhere a commission stirs
and an impure sign is resurrected.

*

In your early forties you refuse to count.
You would rather split the hairs of desire.
Plan how to deceive your mother. Recreate
a strange Disney tableau with that apple

(I guess you never had the chance to be
perverse in the way we are,
deliberately, to set ourselves against
the permissiveness of consumerism).

So inevitably your script is uploaded
to limbo, that zone of bodiless malaise
in the grey precincts of pure information.
It's the ultimate place to reinvent yourself.

*

A scrap of mathematical doggerel
and buried somewhere beneath the spot
an old Amstrad computer.

There you sit on top of it all, bemused
by such earnest yet facetious adulation
for a suicide. Alan Turing in bronze...

I approach you in the dark garden
with a mixture of compassion
and frustration – frustration

that besides the Aspergic fanaticism for maths
there was just the chess, the running and sex
that happened to be illegal.

(Is the frustration that the sex was not
fundamentally transgressive
but rather can be made banal?)

*

In the virtual world that's bringing you back
something is wrong
with the way we're building your avatar.

You planned gameover with precision
reserved for lab work, exquisite procedures
that could be executed only once.

Wrenched back in bronze, something is lost.
A surplus. The buoyant fantasy decocted
to lace that ancient apple, at once

aspiration and rebuke, possessed
of a mythic complexity that can't be explained
without the halting problem,

a whole never expressed
by methodical enumeration of its parts
but captured with a glance at the outlier.

*

Stigma is ironically withheld. That's the fashion.
Success is worth analysis and light falls
on the hidden domestic quirks
that code celebrity.

More than this
others have already said better
with the sincerity of plainer forms, straight
talking and the confidence of systematic research.

(Meanwhile I plan
unplannable manoeuvres, these capricious forays
on boom money, hoping to scoop
some bitter beauty.)

Plan 43 – missing persons

Perhaps Alan Turing faked his death for the sake of a spectacle still pending. He's living with Elvis in Cape Town. In an ashram with Richey Manic. Shooting pool with Lord Lucan. Playing *briscola* with Jesus in a shady bar near the Spanish Steps. Those that have eyes need to ensure they are connected up to appropriate cognitive algorithms. No, I mean those that have the appropriate cognitive algorithms need to ensure that the things they're connected up to are eyes. A pair belonging to a close friend saw an elderly English gentleman with a Hungarian moustache who was sitting in a wheelchair by the lake in Bellagio doing *The Times* cryptic crossword. 'Morning,' she said. 'Morning,' he said. 'Isn't life an enigma?' she said, testing him with a wink. But at that moment his scowling Lombardi carer appeared and wheeled him back to a secluded villa with high walls.

The subject supposed to write

I don't get visitors. Not usually. Except by accident. My windowless office on the lower ground floor of the British Library is between the Gents and the Ladies and appears to have had its decor done by the same interior designer. Furious sunflower yellow and brown smoked mirrors. Brutal. I once put in a request for a sign for the door, 'Authorial Investigations'. I probably used the wrong form. Vampira in admin would have it impaled on her reject spike, a sight to cheer her after the next customer service training session. My door remained morosely blank, an old hardback without a dust jacket. So the snake-hipped woman side saddle on my desk in a 50s pencil dress that was as red as a 24-hour loan sticker was both a surprise and palette disaster.

'Looking for the Ladies?'

She stood up, demurely offered a hand. 'I'm Astra,' she squeaked. 'You do investigations, don't you?'

I steered around the handshake. Didn't look at her. 'Investigations,' I repeated. 'Yeah. Right.' I slumped into the grizzled pit of my desk chair. 'You've got some dead writer and you want me to find out how and when he got rubbed out? Sure, if that's what you want. That's what they pay me for.' That was pretty much all the work there had been since 67. Deaths deaths deaths. With the occasional interlude when a writer played dead to get investigated. Just for the attention. Writers.

'I've got something different for you. You know Alan Turing?'

'Maths dude. Secret Government work in the war. Suicide job. Didn't write much. "Hyperboloids of wondrous light" etc. Probably an acquired taste.'

'I want you to find out if he's still alive.'

I lurched round and looked at her. The swivel mechanism in my chair mewed in unaccustomed agony. She was serious. I slowly laid out a clean sheet of paper in front of me and wrote her name, 'Astra', at the top with deliberation. It was a long time since I'd held a pen. That form on Vampira's spike was the last time, at a guess. Astra walked round behind my desk and looked over my shoulder.

'Small A.'

'What?'

'Small A. Astra with a small A. astra.'

I raised an eyebrow.

'I'm a performance artist,' she said. I dutifully crossed out the 'A' and wrote an 'a' above it. She might look like a knock-off Claudia Cardinale, but the term 'performance artist' covered a lot of sins, no doubt. Still, nothing wrong with your name being a trademarked brand name, I thought. Trade copy, some foxing.

'What's your name, by the way?' she asked looking up from under her long lashes like she was trying to discreetly browse spines on the top shelf.

'Filippo.'

'Ok. Filippo. Filippo what?'

'Filippo nothing,' I said. 'That's all you need to know.'

'I'll call you Fi,' she crooned like some medieval manuscript junkie high on sniffing between spore-caked pages. I ignored her.

'So what makes you think the guy is still kicking around?' I asked.

She reached into her dress. I politely averted my gaze. Three sheets of folded paper. She opened their crackly wings and they fluttered into life, landing lightly in front of me.

'Poems,' she said simply. 'I know someone who's claiming Turing has been writing poems. I mean, after 1954.'

'54?'

'The year he's supposed to have committed suicide.'

'Where d'you get them?'

'Off a poet.'

'Name?'

'I can't say. Let's just call him "S", can we? He's the one who's claiming Turing is still alive.'

I nodded. 'Give us the full story.'

According to the mysterious S, Turing faked his suicide and escaped to Key West in 1954. Turing gave up his scientific and mathematical work and decided – out of thin air, mark you – to become a poet. That's how the story went. It was meant to be this great turning point in Turing's life, a turn from the sciences to the arts. Turing lies low for a bit and then, over the next few decades, starts cranking out the poetry.

'Bollocks,' I said.

astra patiently dabbed the first sheet of paper with a gloved hand.

'But look at the photo.'

A washed out photo was paper-clipped to the first poem, a small square window into the black and white world of the dead.

'That's Bob Donlin, Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg, Robert LaVigne and Lawrence Ferlinghetti standing outside Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco. It was taken in 1955. See in the background that man with a tweed sports jacket taking a newspaper from the rack..?'

'You don't mean to tell me you think that's him? Turing? Alive and well?'

'That's what S is saying. That's what I want you to investigate.'

I googled a portrait of the man. Yes. There was the side parting. Those ears. But on its own it didn't amount to much. I scanned through the poem underneath the photo. Second rate Wallace Stevens, dated 1955. Clearly the work of a beginner.

The Red Queen

Call in the boats on the boating lake,
put the miniature train to bed; the ice-cream van
has gone now and the sea-front smells of chips.
Let the patron of the crazy golf collect his putters,
the whelk vendors close their hatches,
and the antique shops doze in gloom.
It's time for the arcade's jangling lights.
Poetry is the mathematics of the night.

Take a trip to the dark side of the moon,
cross the ocean and get off your head
like a red queen in some insubstantial pageant
running at Eve and Adam's. If these are dreams,
they're of what lies outside the dream, that
which no computation ever deigns to show.

Let numbers give up the fight.
Poetry is the mathematics of the night.

A Turnin, Blackpool and Key West, 1955

'But apparently this is by someone called A Turnin?' I said pointing at the author's credit at the bottom of the poem.

'Everything Turing published was under a different pseudonym.'

'Well that's all very convenient. But what that also suggests to me is that the poems could actually genuinely have been written by different people. Ever think of that? People using – excuse such a radical conjecture – their own names.'

astra made no response. She folded away the first poem.

'S says there's this reel-to-reel recording of Charles Olson reading from his Maximus poems at Robert Creeley's in 1959. The recording starts too soon and catches the end of a poem being read in a halting English voice. The same poem, with minor edits, appeared in an irregular Santa Cruz poetry magazine called *Heads and Tails* in 1960 where it's attributed to a poet called AL Stort.'

'And you're going to tell me this AL Stort wrote nothing else?'

'Not so far as I've been able to find out.'

'Is there anything about the poem to suggest..?'

astra cut me off by silently holding up her hands and shrugging. She nodded at the page in front of me.

To Fibonacci, a letter about dappled things [redacted]

I must speak of morphogenesis,
of formations of land and sea
that fuse and fracture as scabby continents
drift on a molten globe

Of liquids that coalesce
in momentary starfish, spiny urchins,
jellyfish rosettes, the fluorescence
of cephalopods

These giant radiolaria
that emerge from deep iterations,
from recursive geometric blooms,
are not freaks or rarities

They are
the knobbly encrustations
of life's ancient proclivity

This flush of autumn erupting
on the margin of pond water
is not a mathematician's embellishment

It is the cosmic interplay
of a million fish scales
fragmenting fibrils of light

It is generation, the facts
of life – that every possible behaviour
is tested by life

Between the coupled colours
are fringes where even my own
subtle predicament comes
into existence

It freckles where the gaze lands,
full and lean, bedazzled and dimmed,
a tao-ing of dichotomies

There is nothing sets me apart

No biologist will be able
to say I was more as I am
this way alone

A man
is a piece of work,
a mess of obscure liaisons
in which no action is fraudulent

And curling in upon himself without pause
he trades on coastlines, pushing upwards
to react, to diffuse, beauty
from change

Morphogenesis is this

AL Stort, Black Mountain, 1960

'You got these poems off the poet we're calling "S", right? I'm going to have to meet him. You're going to set it up for me.'

*

It's not often my work takes me out of town. The prospect of breaking out a fresh blue expenses form from where Vampira keeps them under lock and key in admin filled me simultaneously with horror and excitement. But still no meeting with S had been arranged.

I spent weeks waiting for astra to call during which time I only once returned to find someone in my office. After the usual evil lunchtime espresso with its customary smack of burnt book, I got back to find a woman retouching her makeup in the mirrors on the walls of my office. She picked up her laptop and slipped away without a word.

'It's been difficult, Fi,' astra peeped. The call had come at last like an illustration after pages and pages of textual humdrum. 'But it's arranged. He'll meet you at the Hardy Tree...'

The sort of overly poetic place a poet would pick: St Pancras churchyard. The tree where Hardy stacked gravestones in the pattern of a book that's had its front and back cover bent back until they lie against each other and the pages form a three hundred and sixty degree fan. Tedious work. Prepared him mentally for *Tess*.

'He'll be wearing a fedora...'

It was beginning to feel like I was the victim of an enormous cliché. And given that the Hardy Tree was walking distance the prospect of lunch and a light supper on expenses was looking remote. Vampira would grind the form into the office carpet under a long black spike heel.

'And he'll have a lily in his lapel...'

I balked.

'For fuck's sake...'

'Don't be like that, Fi, it's been hard enough to get him to agree. He's bringing another poem by Turing that he thinks he's located.'

*

The hat was in his hands. He'd removed it, presumably, to let the oblique winter sunlight wash over his cheeks like weak tea over parchment. He was dressed as you would expect for a poet, vintage Michael Palin with a dash of Monty Don. Shabby navy blue linen jacket, crumpled pale blue linen shirt, possibly a red neckerchief knotted round his neck.

The churchyard held traffic noise at its perimeter like a distant booming memory. We made a cursory inspection of the Hardy Tree. 'You know Hardy wrote his own official biography before he died?' said S.

'Isn't that what you call an autobiography?' I quipped.

'You don't understand. It was meant to be passed off as written by someone else. As he says about himself in the biography, he "loved the art of concealing art." '

'Yeah, right,' I said, 'I do that all the time. Except people think it's just lack of talent.'

We started a circuit of St Pancras Gardens, pacing slowly.

'So tell me how you found these poems you think are by Turing,' I prompted.

'It started when I...' S paused. 'I found them among my papers.'

'You mean you wrote them yourself? You're working some kind of hoax?'

'I don't think so.'

'You don't *think* so?' I repeated incredulously.

'I haven't written anything myself since...' S paused again, rendered speechless, his jaw loose like a broken spine, lips waiting for words that didn't come.

I gave him time to gather his thoughts. He was shaking very slightly as though he'd drunk too much coffee. The memory of whatever happened to stop him writing seemed to pass across his face like the shadow of an origami vulture made from a publisher's rejection slip.

'Have you seen the film *Lost Highway*?' S asked, eventually finding his voice again. I hadn't. 'Oh never mind. It's just there's a scene in it where this guy meets someone at a party who says to him, "We've met before haven't we?" So the guy tells him, no, he doesn't think so. But the person is insistent, he says, "At your house, don't

you remember?" The guy doesn't remember at all, so he asks the person if he's sure and the person says, "Of course. As a matter of fact I'm there *right now*." '

I took a moment to digest this. 'I'll see if it's on youtube,' I said, deciding to ignore it for the time being, 'Or are you saying you met someone at a party who...' I tailed off.

S didn't offer any insights. He sighed melancholically, the sound of pigskin sliding slowly over polished oak.

'So you have writer's block,' I said. 'What of it? You're a poet. It's inevitable at some point. It's in the manual. Tell me about how it started. If it's going to help me.'

'It was when I got back from... I mean after...' Again the hesitation. 'Something happened out there. I was in my flat in Italy. And then I came back and... *He's* still out there. He's still in my flat.'

'Who?'

S was looking at his fists which were trying to wrench apart the brim of his hat. His voice quavered. The lily in his buttonhole seemed to sicken and wilt as though it were in a flicker book animation.

"The Subject Supposed to Write"

'Who is he?'

'He's called S.'

'S-dash?'

'No, S.'

'What's he doing out there?'

'Writing a detective story. Some sort of crime thriller thing. You know. Genre. I have the feeling it's going very well.'

'What happened out there? Where did this S' come from?'

We completed our circuit of the gardens and sat on a bench. S didn't answer directly. He embarked on a long tortuous description of all the things he said people used to enjoy doing but now get others to enjoy on their behalf so that they can progressively enjoy more and more things while actually enjoying less and less. He said pornography has sex for us, reviewers read books for us, recipes enjoy food for us, candles say prayers for us and so on. It was, he supposed, inevitable that we should find someone to write for us.

'I've written nothing since I came back,' S concluded. 'Perhaps I never will again. And since then I've started finding the Turing poems.'

'Could you yourself have written these poems by Turing before you went out to Italy? Before S' appeared?'

'I could, I don't remember. I can't remember.'

'Or this S' of yours, could he have written them?'

'Oh he's no poet. He does the private investigator fiction stuff. Stuff that sells. Stuff you don't have to think about.'

'So what do you want me to do about it?' I said standing up.

'Find out if these poems could really be by Turing. Here, I have another. Might help.'
S reached into his breast pocket and handed me an unsealed envelope. 'And maybe
in doing so you'll find out... What happened out there to make S' appear.'

I pulled the sheet out of the envelope and gave it a once-over.

Saint Sebastian

Mantegna does him three times, the first
Saint Sebastian being a girlish youth,
knock kneed and flanked by an Etruscan pilaster
whose five faces of urns and acanthus leaves
perhaps reflect an enigma in the physical body
at odds with the fifteen arrows that pierce the saint
mathematically. Of these, eleven arrows
have an upward trajectory, fourteen recede
from the viewer, and eight fly to the left.
Treating the arrows as vectors makes it possible
to resolve them into components that can be summed
approximately as follows: five arrows shot
from team A at the front, lifted on a grass mound
to the level of the torso; three arrows
shot from below by team B, who have gained access
to a cellar directly beneath; and a third team, C,
who shoot one and a half arrows from a window
in a warehouse on the saint's left, not shown.

When Mantegna does him again, the right foot
is turned out, the back less arched – generally
a more masculine pose. The ten arrows are all
most unlikely. The first is called Simon. Then,
Arnold. The next is Iain, who crosses with Mark.
This one is Jonathon. That one there is probably
Michael. Another painful encounter, here,
is named Christopher. Observe how Adrian
is like a running stitch, and how Peter
is almost hidden from view. Lastly, enjoy
how David skewers the hips in a humiliation
as adroit as the placing of a fig tree
to the saint's immediate right.

As Mantegna does it in his third and final attempt,
the saint has got nowhere, inhabits a void,

criss-crossed by arrows like he's inside a magician's
sword box illusion. The end is nigh. Sixteen
arrows penetrate him. Medical discourse
in the heart, neoliberalist discourse
through his right lung, biological determinism
between two ribs, meritocracy, false
consciousness, the American dream and
social progress in the abdomen,
discourse theory in the small of the back.
Two arrows bother the pelvic region,
sublimation and – you can only just see
the flights protruding – overdetermination.
The legs are host to six arrows, from the top
down, the sememe and grameme above the knee,
then the lexeme, morpheme and grapheme below,
and finally a very painful phoneme
seemingly in the ball of the foot. Each arrow
hopes to make the poor saint say
something, but it's to no avail. The candle
in the painting has gone out. Around it on a scroll
is written in Latin 'Nothing is stable if not
divine. The rest is smoke.'

AI Twist, New York, 1977

'I see it was supposedly written in New York? Last I heard Turing was in North Carolina, hanging out at Creeley's place with Charles Olson,' I commented wryly.

'My theory, from what I've pieced together so far, is that he settled in North Carolina initially, via Key West. He then came back to Europe in 1974 to work with Pier Paolo Pasolini on a film script. He was there until after Pasolini was murdered in 1975. He visited Cambridge briefly on his way back to the States, and once back decided to resettle in New York.'

'Hum. You really don't believe he died in 54, do you? What makes you think he went to Italy?'

'In 1974 someone called Allie Voltanino flew from Charlotte Douglas International Airport to Fiumicino Airport outside Rome. Pasolini's journals record him working

with Voltanino on a script for what would be Pasolini's first film for Warner Brothers.'

'What *was* his first film for Warner?'

'Oh it never got made. The journals give the working title as *Father Lode*, a science fiction project about a state governed by an artificial intelligence.'

'Ok, let me get this straight. All we have is a man called Voltanino flying in from the States to work on a film project relating to artificial intelligence. You must know you're reading too much into this?'

'Wait until you see the poem written by Voltanino after Pasolini's death in 75.'

Of course, S didn't have that poem with him. Why didn't he have it? In my opinion because he now had to go away and write it. He was some kind of desperate hoaxer, or a variation on the theme. But always the same goal: attention. At a push, I was willing to believe S had a dissociative order. Something like that. Perhaps S wrote the poems before whatever strange happening took place at that flat in Italy and he was now experiencing a psychogenic fugue. Like the guy William James describes: middle-aged vicar, father of two, happy families. One day goes to his bank, draws a bundle, jumps a horsecar and disappears. Changes his name, sets himself up a nice quiet little shop in a new town. Convenience store. He's a gentleman of business. Keeps himself to himself. Suddenly wakes up three months later wondering where the hell he is.

Or then again maybe S goes back to his studio flat, pops his favourite chemical, transitions into his Alan Turing personality, and turns out the next instalment. Wakes up bemused with a new poem in front of him.

What was astra's role in this? She was meant to come with me to the churchyard to meet S but didn't show. Were they in a relationship? She was a doll. Tottering

around in those retro red dresses would surely make her muse material for S. I supposed she might be thinking that if I could resolve the issue of Alan Turing (dead or alive or dead but alive a little longer than generally supposed) S might be able to start writing again and she wouldn't be subjected to the same excruciating conversations, looping round and round, about him having nothing to say or write anymore.

I decided to do nothing. I'd wait until I saw this specimen of Voltanino's work that S had promised. The longer I waited the more I was certain there was nothing to see. Or that Voltanino's work would turn out to be by a minor poet called Voltanino. And S just another wide-eyed dupe. The sort usually sopped up by the latest conspiracy theory. If no conspiracy theory appeals they simply start joining the dots themselves. Plain coincidence sets it all up nicely. UFOs and Paranormal section, Sir? Right next to Self Help at the end of the aisle.

*

I was filling in a holiday request form when astra rang. The form was on dog-eared green card. I could see my last holiday two months ago indignantly stamped by Vampira's rubber stamp, leaving a mark in red ink that looked like a skull. She wasn't going to like another request so soon. But my reasoning went, if S was right, there was nothing for me to investigate that I couldn't suppose CCTV had already investigated.

astra was frantic. She was crying. 'You've got to get here,' she shrilled. 'Something terrible has happened.'

'Where are you?'

'Redcross Way. The gates to Cross Bones.'

I skimmed the holiday form onto my desk and made my way across town, my legs like a pair of eyes bobbing from word to word in some unputdownable thriller. A sense of purpose was as good as a holiday for the brief flash for which it usually lasted.

By the time I had walked down Southwark Street to the turn under the frowning horizontal of the railway bridge, the rain was crackling incessantly on my waterproof. It sounded like an angry editor screwing up page after amateur page. I was coming up on the barred iron gates of Cross Bones cemetery. astra was standing there motionless, drenched to the point where the rain seemed to sluice straight through her. Her clothes were darkened and lank from the rain's passage, slick strands of hair were pasted to her cheek, rivulets twisted sporadically from every hem, from her dangling fingertips, her eyelashes, nose and chin. In front of her on the tarmac was a decapitated body.

I flinched. I instinctively looked away. My hand went to my mouth. I instinctively looked back. Away again. Clenched my teeth. Gripped astra's shoulder. 'The police. Have you called the police?' She shook her head. 'Do it now.' She didn't respond. I pulled out my phone, dialled.

'Wait.' She pointed. I looked back at the body. Started to take in details. Details such as the Palin-esque attire. Crumpled blue linen. Decapitation somehow made the scene easier to read. The head was nowhere to be seen. There was no expression to respond to, no life. The body could have been a dummy but for the special effects around the neck. astra was pointing at the body's left hand. It held a folded piece of paper. Wet and dimpled, it was beginning to look like soft smooth white cheese. 'Take it,' she whispered urgently.

An idea eventually becomes just plain text set down on the page. And every uniquely strange person eventually becomes a body. The police dealt with the body. We were in no way implicated with the body. The body would be removed. Efforts would be made to identify the body. The body would be returned to the

next of kin or given a respectful burial. Don't concern yourselves with the body. The police are always dealing with bodies. They know how to handle a body.

astra and I sat in the clammy Southwark Tavern. Forest green tiles and brown vinyl. Sticky waxed table tops. Gloomy concealed lighting on puckered and tarnished brass fittings. Brandy.

'He asked me to meet,' astra blurted. 'Whatever was in his hand... I think he was going to give it me. To give to you. What is it?'

'Don't know. It's drying there on the radiator.'

'Open it.'

I unfolded the page like I was peeling apart a soggy white bread sandwich to see what kind of fish paste was responsible for its state.

The imitation game

I am dragging up an absence
summoning intellect from the absence
platform Mary Janes with five inch heels propping up absence
I am dragging up absence
playing the 'imitation game' with an absence
probing the professed gender of absence
peering into the heart of mitosis to locate absence
dragging intelligence into the world
from an algorithmic soup of zeroes and ones
I am putting a couture satin corset on absence
with banks of sensors, performance monitors and a soft voice
I am conflating binary oppositions in absence
I am injecting hormones into absence
I write code to generate in absence
to respond to questions from outside absence
processing symbols, implying the presence of absence
with a hand on the hip of absence I paint the pouting lips of absence
of course I do, I paint them red, after all, I am dragging up absence
I am covering the machine with voile and taffeta

fastening the machine with pearl buttons and silver studs
so absence can take its first steps out under city lights
dragged up in false memories
dragged up in silken discourse
dragged up in metaphorical makeup
dragged up by hating mathematics and flaunting a dizzy sense of direction
lost ruined disgraced and humiliated in freakish absence
I am asking a question that gets answered from behind the door to absence
I am asking the same question again at another door to absence
deciding which absence is real
I am planning on having sex with absence
fucking absence until I'm part of the absence
and inside me there is an absence
I have made myself into a machine that tests absence
I have made absence into a machine that functions to conceal
its own absence
I have made friends with absence
I am going to visit absence
I am leaving absence and taking a long trip back into absence
and I am leaving behind an absence for you
just for you, an absence, dragged up

Elaine Madison Turing, New York, 1984

Not the Voltanino poem I had been expecting. It was now looking increasingly unlikely I would be able to get my hands on that one.

'You think there are more?' I said, handing over the poem. 'Where would he have kept them?'

'Do you think it was an accident?' asked astra, ignoring me. She gestured towards the window where passing blue lights momentarily made an electric line against the wet grime of the afternoon.

'No.'

'Nor do I. How could it be. But who would do something like that?'

'Did he ever mention Italy to you? Did he ever mention S?'

My question passed straight through astra like light through a blank white page. She was gazing out of the window. 'astra?' I queried. She was in a thrall. 'astra?'

'Let's get round to his flat and pick up any more poems before the police close it off,' she said rapidly, fixing her eyes on me and standing up. 'I've got a key.'

*

Which form? The holiday form or the expense form? I went for the expense form. It would be tougher, a high risk strategy, even. But I stood to gain. astra and I were going to find S' in Italy.

We'd searched the flat in Blackheath. Found maps. Hodges' biography of Turing. Printouts from the Turing archive. A guide to the films of Pasolini. An anthology, *Postmodern American Poetry*. And so on: half mugs of scummy tea. Dog ends. A shopping list: light bulb, AA batteries, staples. Poetry fridge magnets saying nothing, no secret messages, only the nonsense left when the things seen every day stop being seen.

Something about searching the flat belonging to S made me nauseous. Perhaps it was the cool certitude with which astra lead the search. The way she checked in the finds like an overzealous librarian. The way she seemed to know when the search was over, when there was nothing else to find. Or perhaps my nausea was no more than a result of the involuntary pity caused by seeing the sad remnants of a deluded life laid out like an unfinished dinner.

We found two poems. One that S would have claimed, in all likelihood, to have been evidence of Turing's brief visit to England before returning to his exile in the United States, after Pasolini's death:

Hot pink lamé at home

They're unnecessary, the roast pork
in foil in the fridge and bubblegum
multinationals trading copper mesh
with bold pink stars made
from two triangles, one inversion.

Sign the dotted line then go cruise
in Elvis' Cadillac; enjoy the dreamy chrome
contrapuntal detailing. This
is how it was always meant to be.

Incarnadine sirloins clothed in moiré
patterns beam down bent
on incorporating autonomy (public
joke), Cam play, and dressing avatars
in scaffold networks that contextualise
humid back rooms. I is sitting
there naked, private and unpublished.

Lame equals impotent, metallised
flesh shrunk, mercury in the food chain.

It's literary fabric Made in England,
stretched over matter, signals
alternating through domestic hydrocarbons.

I come back to it, my foxes feral,
my own machine morbidly obese,
to find on their Backs a cyborg rewoven
from magenta glitter, the coral musings
of gold plated topologies laying
down tracks with killer drops.

Application of diamante interjections
to perforate such a sinewy weave
would give life much needed meaning.

The reverse is also true. Although
current spikes have been worked into
a regular grid-like pattern, allowing
conflation of skin with artificial covers,
world as flesh with steel and glass,
it's not enough. A cult figure is all.

Baby pink is mapping empire, the cut
of paths of least dialectical resistance;
hardware is catching the light. To return
unpicked, as I do in my sleep, is
no more than a moment's scintillation,

the very stuff of whatever designates;
the eye catches the mirror ball
to expose a static shower of sparks
in colours that are at once tender.

Take those colours, ask the obvious:
if pinks are hot what colour is cool?
And what to say to the catwalk? Too
pink and silvered over with spidery
circuitboards, systems' shine? A subject
reappropriation that wants to say
I want to say stereotype misses
the point: metallic thread provides
bidirectional comms like a twisted pair.

Allen Tyrnne, Cambridge, 1975

Sure. Because the reader was to suppose that Turing came under the influence of the Cambridge School while passing through. Very neat. Bumped into a notable figure in the cake shop. Nudged up against him in some Grantchester tea room. Scuse me. Ever so sorry. Cue poetry banter.

The second poem was an anomaly. Didn't fit with S's narrative at all, placing Turing in Athens. Guest of James Merrill? Camping out on the Aegean?

The Perverse State

We create a Unix Ouija board, David and I,
using C shell. We run it, holding hands, making
a circle by our fingertips touching either side
of the CRT display, at the same time degaussing
the alphabetic ghosts. Who do we call on?
Who would come. One content with this form.
MERRILL HERE TO TELL YOU AFTER ALL
EVERY POEM PRODUCED UNDER CONDICTIONS
OF THE CAPITULIST MODE OF PROUDCTION IS
SECWIT DIALOGOE BETWEEN POET AND
BANCKER These aren't the views I thought
you would hold? I GONE THROUGH A
SIGNIFICANT CHANCE BEING I AM NOT
DEED How do these new opinions work?

THINK OFF A POEM ON A GARDEN
 THE NARRATOR INJOYS SITE OF A SPARROW
 POET GIVES NARRATOR THE WHORL OF POET
 REASONABLY PRIZED PRIVATE GARDEN
 FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE TO INDELUGE
 IDOL TRANSCENDENTAL SPECULATIONS
 AND THE SENTIMENT SURROUNDING
 BUSY WORKER SPARROW SATISFIED IN AND OF
 ITSELF WITH SIMPLE WANTS AND NEEDS
 But what if the poet wrote one Sunday afternoon
 in a moment's respite snatched from a poorly paid
 and gruelling urban sixty hour week,
 a desperate attempt to see an alternative
 and eternal world? PRECAPITALIST Maybe.
 UFOPIAN Possibly. PASTORAL If you will.
 TRAPPED IN THE SAME SYSTEM KNOWING
 ONLY ESCAPE IN FANTASY WHICH FAILS
 AS ROBINSO CRUSOE RECREATING COMMUNISM
 AND EXCHANGE INSIDE A SELF THAT MEMES
 THE ONLY KNOWN WORLD Victim then? BORED
 NOW How much does your new state cost you?
 NOT A WORD Is there anyone else we can talk to?

YES Edmund Lynch? NO Who are you then? MONSIEUR
 FOUCAULT FRESH FROM BERKELEY LECTURES
 AND DRINKS AT THE STUD ON FOLSOM You! You believe
 in what you're doing here? I RITE FOR
 THE PLEASURE OF USERS How do you communicate?
 A LECTURE POWER RELATION FROM THE OUTSIDE
 TO YOUR BOX OF TRICKS Where is outside?
 THE OVERWHELMING CREEPY UNSPEAKABLE
 Are you in pain? PUEB VIOLENCE IS
 A WORDLESS GESTURE How would you explain
 my situation? UNREAL TO HAVE A STATE
 YOU MUST EXIST THE STATE HAS PLACED
 ITS HAND UPON YOU YOU HAVE FALLEN
 TO YOUR KNEES THERE YOU SERVE
 NONEXISTENCE David, stop transcribing, I am
 a bit scared. I mean it, David, stop. ^C^C^C

Alaine de Tournier, Athens, 1984

There was something else I found in S's flat. I didn't let Astra know I'd found it. I
 don't know why. It just struck me it would be useful to know something she didn't.

Maybe I had a hunch it would be meaningful later because it was as if a camera lingered on my hand as I fetched out the printout from a pile and stowed it surreptitiously in my pocket. But I was usually wrong in these cases. The printout was a journal entry:

I sit here unable to write, watching the sky darken over Blackheath, while out there in Italy S' is on a roll - his psychoanalytic detective story is quickly taking shape. It started to come together for him as soon as I left. For a few days he let the little mountain village absorb my absence. Life in the shadow of the Apennines continued. Vittorio's ancient mother finally died: I'd heard her for weeks calling out every evening at dusk, bewildered and fearful. Gemma carried on bottling tomatoes. Carlo carried on muttering: *É così la vita*. And Dario was still in love with the Polish care worker who, at forty, was half his age. Gemma forces a biscuit on Carlo. *Mangia*. He won't eat it. She makes him put it in his pocket for later.

Then after several days of quiet, S' rolls up the shutters, clicks paper into my old typewriter and starts work. Nobody notices. He's there still, knocking out a steady twenty pages a day. Damn it all, on my own typewriter. Here I am in England, tense, clenched, unable to make a decisive move, unable to think a single thought for fear I'll lose every other thought. And there he is, confidently hitting the mark, getting his quota done before the heat of the day, then down to the town for an espresso in *Hotel Terme*. Assured work. An effective routine. They think he is me. They hear his happy taptaptap for several hours every morning and quietly leave him a bag of *cicoria* on the doorstep from their veg patch. Wonder if he likes that stuff?

I'll phone him up, damn him. Could find out how he's managed it - get some tips. No longer a phone line. Telecom Italia bills have stopped collecting under the eaves like swifts' nests. I could call Gemma who lives next door? She could get hold of the *scrittore*, get him to come to the phone? But haven't I heard that conversation before? You can never surprise yourself with internal dialogue.

*

We were three abreast on a low-cost carrier. Knees wedged up against the in-flight reading: calm yellow haired cartoon men with blank faces philosophically adopting the brace position, perfume ads pouring women like golden wraiths onto glossy black grounds, their brand names tortured by pin-sharp serifs. astra was sulking in the aisle seat. I had the middle. From the window seat a scrupulous man in his seventies bothered the stewardess with the particulars of the gin he wanted. Miniatures and a plastic cup passed before me, then notes and change were laboriously exchanged.

'Let me guess. You're going for the shopping and the Trastevere nightlife?' he said in Brian Sewell tones after strenuous swigging.

'Not really,' I said. astra tilted up her sunglasses onto her forehead so all could see she was feigning sleep.

'No? Gosh. You're not one for the Romans, surely?'

'Not at all.'

'Then it must be the Renaissance art. You know, the female face was invented in the *quattrocento*. Before then we had Madonnas that looked by jowly middle-aged monks with rotten teeth. And after, oh you never saw such tender features. You must take in the...'

'Actually,' I began.

'Not the Caravaggios!' he interrupted, booming in mock horror.

'Actually,' I continued, 'we're not staying in Rome. We're visiting a,' I searched for the word, 'an acquaintance in the mountains.'

'Ah an ex-pat. Yes I see. Artist, I shouldn't wonder? Runs a little guest house? A retired East End mobster now a dab hand at yoga, perhaps?'

'None of the above,' I smiled. 'A doppelganger.'

I looked at astra's face. Her mock sleep had turned into real sleep, lulled by the uncanny hum of the cabin. Or had it? Perhaps I was taken in like everyone else. Her hair hung in inky descenders across her cheeks, her eyebrows like circumflexes. But the line of her jaw must have been invented in the *quattrocento*, it was pure fifteenth century. What did she want? Why should she care if the poems were by Turing or not? Who gives a fig about Alan Turing? Except the members of all those centenary committees. What does the object of desire desire? Besides to be desired? That the mystery is never solved, that the pages continue to turn. Was she nothing more than the literary coyness that keeps the eyes gliding over text – a fake, changing her face on every page for the sake of the rails of desire?

Predawn light slid in the porthole as we crossed the alps and were drawn slowly back to earth.

*

We pulled into a lay-by. My turn to drive. Outside the chill cubicle of the car, wet with aircon, the heat rubbed us thickly. We'd driven in silence, tired by the early flight, the eerie panoramas of spangled towns passing below us like complex hieroglyphics in the darkness before dawn.

'Have you given any thought to S?' I asked. 'I mean who he is? What do we say to him?'

There was a significant silence.

'We need to approach him with care,' said astra. 'We don't know what he's capable of.'

'You mean you think S' killed S?' I said, making a poor attempt to conceal my stupefaction.

'Yes. Possibly as some kind of plot device. How else would you replace an experimental poet with a crime writer?'

'Is that the kind of poetry that S wrote?' I asked.

'What, experimental? The sort that reverse engineers itself into a series of absences? Oh absolutely.'

I nodded sagely. Pursed my lips. There was one less experimental poet in world. Too bad. One more crime writer in his place. Too bad.

'But S' has the perfect alibi, doesn't he? He was in Italy in S's flat. Not marauding around South London decapitating poets.'

'Yes, exactly,' astra said archly. 'Whose flat?'

Whose flat? S's?

astra lapsed back into an itchy silence and I amused myself thinking about Turing. He would be how old now? Ninety-nine? One hundred? Dead, probably, even if he had lived. If not dead then parked in some greasy upright armchair in a St Leonards care home, checked-in under one of his pseudonyms. Mr Turner. Waiting for the final turn. Mr Turner, wake up. It's time for your medicine, dear. Shall we put you out on the lawn for an hour? Or would rather watch television? It's *Ice Road Truckers*, your favourite.

If he had lived and died a second death, how would we ever be able to trace him? Which pseudonym would be on his gravestone? And where? St Leonards, New York, Athens? How long should we search before we decide the evidence doesn't exist? How will we recognise the evidence when we see it? The point at which we can conclusively give up the search will never come. If only there was a theory that could prove it was not worth searching.

I shook my head. Crazy. I'd got caught up musing about the Alan Turing that lived on after Alan Turing died like some adolescent reading about how the moon landings didn't happen or how Russian sleeper agents shot JFK. The magnetic attraction of a conspiracy. The imaginary worlds of others, passed round like a virus.

I tried feeling sorry for S instead. In order to do so I first had to assume that he wasn't a literary hoaxer. That the Turing poems were no cold calculation designed to pique a publisher and find more readers.

Say he was victim of an obscure multiple personality disorder. Now feel sorry for him. Or if not that then it was his pathological propensity to see patterns, to make shapes. He looks at a page and the positions of the letter 'a' form a face in his mind.

Suppose someone like that came across a tantalising series of coincidences. A procession of obscure second rate poets who had the misfortune to contain a linguistic trigger in their names had been appropriated by S and turned into a single person, the single surviving Alan Turing. To construct a story of Turing this way required such a will, such a determination to believe, that I had no doubt in my mind that for S this post-Turing Turing was more real, more coherent, more authentic than the real Turing. More authentic than the real people S met. Those poor real people with all their authentic discontinuities – they're so unconvincing.

*

We pulled up at the flat.

'You go,' said astra. 'I'd better stay in the car.'

The flat had a Tyrolean appearance. Red geraniums bushed generously from large square pots on the balcony. Wide eaves indicated snowy winters. I rang the doorbell and waited. Under the bell was an 'S' typed on a slip of paper behind a clear plastic cover. Someone had pencilled in a dash.

There was no answer. I walked round the side. Listened at a window for the sound of typing, taptaptap. In my mind's eye I saw 'Last night I dreamed I went to Italy again...' being typed up on a clean sheet of paper. Who was typing? I could only see the typist's hands. Male or female?

But there was no sound of typing. I turned to go. A short stocky woman in her late sixties in the adjacent garden was standing under a fig tree looking at me. I caught her eye. She didn't move, unembarrassed of her gaze. I smiled and waved. She didn't react for a moment, but then she started walking towards me. She was covered in a mismatch of colours – a red and blue floral housecoat, a thin yellow shawl, a traditional silk headscarf, orange flowers on white. And big sturdy rollicking boots.

'Fichi,' she said.

'Yes,' I said. 'Your basket is indeed full of figs.' It wasn't going to be an illuminating conversation for either of us. I gestured to the house and shrugged.

'Fuori. A città,' she said.

I mimed typing for my next question. Just to make sure it was the right house.

'Sì, sì, sempre alla macchina da scrivere. Lo conosce? Aspetta. Ho trovato un foglio che il vento ha rubato.'

She hobbled off across her vegetable garden. I wondered whether I should be waiting or not. She returned with a muddy looking sheet of paper. She'd evidently stopped the page blowing away with a boot.

'Dalla finestra,' she explained, demonstrating the sheet of paper flying through the air as she mimicked the noise of high winds.

*

'I take it he's not in?' said astra.

'No but I met his neighbour. An old woman called Gemma. She gave me this sheet of paper to give back to him. Apparently it blew out of his window this morning. She says he's...' I mimed sipping a tiny cup, 'in *Hotel Terme*. Back in that town we passed through on the way, I think.'

'Oh well, I suppose it might be good to meet him in a public place,' said astra. 'Give me that page, I want a look.'

It was another poem. This time 'Alan Turing' took the credit directly. I handed her the sheet along with a free fig.

Thinking through the Algorithm

I remember when I wrote Thinking through the Algorithm I was living near Bletchley and we saw each other every day, Joan, outside Hut 8. My mug was still chained to the radiator and I knew where I had buried the silver. It was a Thursday. First I thought of the algorithm, a simple half-interval search, then I coded it. After that I thought through it (I mean I thought it through) as if I was the thing processing it. In a sense I really was the thing that processed it. In the midday drizzle on a Thursday in October. Then I thought, What is it to think through an algorithm? Is that thinking? I was certainly thinking. And so I began a paper titled Thinking through the Algorithm, except it was only notes, a rough draft at best for a paper and the paper never got written.

Sometimes I think the person you knew, Joan, who made notes for Thinking through the Algorithm on an October afternoon when the message intercepts were unexpectedly sluggish – one of those natural lulls, I suppose – I think that person was created by those notes as though those notes were an algorithm. It's as if the person you knew was whatever algorithm he was thinking through, whether the half-interval search, the stewing of tea in my favourite mug, the route to the silver, the idea of marriage, or the thinking about what it might mean to think through an algorithm.

Wittgenstein said to me, 'Nothing has ever gone wrong that way.' I said I thought that if the bridge between humans and machines was too strong tanks might move across it. And he said, Oh, tanks, I was thinking of something smaller, something like a windup watch in a small box. We never understood each other. Joan, it's not your fault, I was incomprehensible. I was being thought by a different algorithm.

So one Thursday I thought through an algorithm and then thought about what it is to think through an algorithm and then wrote notes titled Thinking through the Algorithm. So what? The whole activity may have occurred within the circumference of another algorithm, lying outside the Wednesday before and the Friday after, but between two years hard labour and the Sexual Offences Act. But so what? I was only making a clever play on the word 'through' and that was about all it amounted to, 'through' meaning here both 'with' and 'by', though now I think there may be no distinction. Can you hear footsteps? No it's my heart in my ear.

Since that was all I had to say I folded up the algorithm along with the notes titled Thinking through the Algorithm, I folded them up into a small square and swallowed them, yes, really swallowed them followed by a swig of sherry, and then I started writing again.

Those notes were code, the algorithm wrote itself out. And in coding my thoughts and memories about writing Thinking through the Algorithm, look, I'm coding a new algorithm, the one that is thinking me now and holds within its circumference those memories, Joan, the mug and the half-interval search. These new notes, which I will title Thinking through the Algorithm, are creating me anew, Joan, a me you never knew, because I wasn't thinking these thoughts until the code came and I am very lonely tonight. Mother, did you receive the blankets I ordered for you? I wasn't missing anything until Thinking through the Algorithm, despite starting as a joke, became somehow tragic. It's coding me to feel apart and I should build a thinking machine that will stop me feeling like this and I should call it a poem.

Alan Turing, New York, 1976

'It changes things, doesn't it?' I said. 'It actually claims to be by Alan Turing. It's got those biographical details too. You know, all the Bletchley stuff about huts and mugs.'

'What difference does that make?' asked astra.

I thought for a moment. Did it make a difference? 'Well even if all the other poems are really what they seem to be, I mean not by Alan Turing at all but by various authors under their own names, this one can't be. It has to be either a hoax or real.'

'Except someone else could have the same name.'

'But not the same biography.'

'But the other Alan Turing, let's call him Turing', might want to write about the famous Turing who shared his name? And anyway, what if the other poems *were* written by Turing?'

I thought for another moment. 'Hum. Then this poem could be a kind of double bluff? Turing passing his work off as the work of a hoaxer? Or a triple bluff. A hoaxer making his hoax look real by including a poem that appears to be the real Turing creating a double bluff to reinforce the hoax that he's using to hide his work.

Then again, perhaps Turing wrote it before he died and just post-dated it for a laugh.'

I thought again. The thinking was beginning to ache. The sun was baking the thoughts out of me like it was bleaching ink from a page. I bit my lip. 'Sometimes when there's a seemingly insoluble problem it's due to the fact that there isn't one problem. There are two or more problems interacting. Perhaps some of the poems are real and some aren't. Or, for instance, he didn't die in 1954 but he didn't write the poem really by him either.'

'Poem really by him?'

I turned the ignition in lieu of answering.

astra scrunched her brow. Reread the poem as I pulled onto the road.

'It's straight out of S's typewriter, isn't it?' said Astra. She sounded crestfallen, the image of the constructed post-Turing Turing gradually disintegrating in her mind like a narrative falling apart into a set of meaningless episodes. 'S wrote the poems. S' was using them in his crime story. S' killed S. Maybe to take the credit. But S' needed more poems and had to start writing them himself. But he's a crime writer, he got it wrong. Didn't get the whole subtlety with the pseudonyms.'

'We don't know that.'

I swerved sharply to avoid an Alfa recklessly cutting a corner on a mountain hairpin and we were silent at last as we digested the sudden sugar of adrenaline in our systems.

*

Hotel Terme was in the main piazza of the spa town. The terrace outside the hotel surveyed the piazza from the intermittent shade of Peroni umbrellas. Inside, the bar was spacious and opulent in a gilt-embossed cloth-bound collector's edition of *The Da Vinci Code* sort of way. High ceilings, too much marble, too much hidden golden lighting, too many fleurs-de-lis. Between the tables were several standard lamps made from unpleasant black headless female mannequins. It was that special Mediterranean chic that went with animal prints, cash-only transactions and bunga bunga.

The bar was not quite empty. There was a young sour looking waitress who was modelling herself on Anna Magnani and planning a middle age of disenchantment, and there was S'. Instantly recognisable.

S' sat at a table, a hovering espresso cup pinched between thumb and index finger while he perused the front page of the *Corriere*. I sat down opposite him. He looked up. He was the double of S. An identical twin. Except the careworn expression of S had been inverted to create one of insouciance. I swallowed. It was S. Then whose body had astra and I stood over? Or had S a twin, was it as simple as that? I decided to play dumb – it wouldn't take much effort.

'I'm afraid I have some upsetting news,' I said.

'Go on.'

'You are S', I take it? There's no easy way to say this. Hopefully you already know so I won't be the first to tell you. S is dead.'

He emptied his espresso cup and delicately rested it back on its saucer with a precision chinking sound.

'I know.'

'Look, I'm sorry, it's just that you're... You're not S are you?'

'Yes, I'm S. And the experimental poet, he was S'. Well spotted.'

'No, I mean really?'

'I can't even begin to fathom what your question means,' he said, beckoning the waitress. 'Have a coffee, why not, and tell me what you're doing here.'

'I'm here with astra,' I began.

'Oh she's a bright little star isn't she?' he said. 'Where is she?'

I avoided the question. I proffered the tatty typescript that his neighbour, Gemma, has given to me with a handful of figs. He took it. Appeared to suck his gums.

'What do you make of it?' he asked at length.

'Is that the best you can come up with?' I said, nonchalantly looking over at the waitress who was creating my espresso like it was a finely turned haiku.

'You think I wrote it?'

'Didn't you?'

'What makes you think that?'

'Someone had to write it.'

'Indeed they did.'

'You can't tell me you think it's real?'

S' sighed. He folded the *Corriere* and span it onto the table beside us. He leant forward.

'I've given up caring. I'm using it in a piece I'm working on. A sort of Lacanian crime story. A sort of "Who killed Alan Turing?" piece. The reader thinks, Hmm, at what point in the story did Alan Turing stop being Alan Turing. That's how they solve the mystery. You might say this poem helps me keep him alive – in my plot I mean.'

'Is this crime story finished?'

'No.'

'How's it going?'

'Easy. Twenty pages every morning then down here for a small reward. I think up the plot and type it out in one fluid continuous move. I'm the subject that S supposed me to be. I write for him who supposes me to write. I am supposed to write. Supposed as in "meant" and supposed as in "believed to" – it amounts to the same thing.'

'Sounds to me like the sort of advice doled out at a residential. Tell me more about the story,' I said. I was beginning to feel weary. This wasn't going to end in a satisfactory way.

'The story? It's hush hush. It's about doubling. That old existential conundrum. I already have a publisher based on the first chapter. She's right now commissioning a suitably suggestive cover illustration.'

Our coffee arrived and he chinked my cup, cup to cup, in miniature celebration.

'Aren't you going to ask about the cover then? It's Alan Turing and he's looking in the mirror and seeing Alan Turing reflected back. Except the Alan Turing reflected back is holding a piece of paper covered in text – a poem.'

'Very nice,' I sipped. 'What happened in the flat?' I then added sharply, hoping to surprise him. 'S was staying there. You arrived and something happened. Then S left and never wrote again.'

He laughed. 'I arrived and something happened,' he repeated, smirking. 'Or something happened and I arrived. Not much of a plot is it?'

'Who are you? Are you his twin?' I asked in exasperation.

'Haven't you heard of the reflexive distortion of a signifying chain?'

'If it's something that happened in an episode of *The Twilight Zone*...' I started saying drily.

'It was another normal day,' he interrupted. 'I had coffee with Gemma who was stewing *cicoria* in a *bagno maria*. Carlo was looking at a pile of logs in her kitchen and idly rubbing his hands together. He was looking troubled so Gemma told him to have a biscuit. "Mangia," she said. But he didn't want one. She made him put the biscuit in his pocket for later. *Hotel Terme* was closed for renovation. I had an idea. I waited a few days, then I got out my old typewriter.'

I was getting nowhere. He wasn't S, he was S', but S' was S. A strange case of spontaneous mitosis. That was the best I could do. The alternative was that he was the same person I had spoken to in London. But in that case whose was the decapitated body? I was feeling uncomfortable. Like S' knew what I was going to say next. Like he would screw up a page and I would fade like a ghost. But there had to be more to it. That was pure cliché. Too *Tales of the Unexpected*. No publisher

would be leaping on that first chapter and commissioning front covers all over Bloomsbury.

I stood up to go.

*

We were early for the flight back from Fiumicino so astra drove into Ostia. We passed through the town and out towards the canal on *Via dell'Idroscalo*. We pulled up on the verge ahead of a small garage selling tyres, a wooden shack that used to be blue. The road was quiet except for the occasional dusty lorry heaped with gravel or hardcore. We got out of the car and crossed to a pair of iron gates in a fence that marked the entrance to a small garden. The gates were held closed with a perfunctory twist of wire. We entered.

The grass in the garden had been flattened into sparse strawy scratchings by the weight of the heat. A short path made an irregular figure eight around the garden. At the far end by an austere white stone sculpture stood the man we had met on the flight out. He dabbed his livery brow with a rag-like red neckerchief pulled from a pocket. He held a piece of paper that looked like it was used to sleeping rough.

'This'll be what you're after,' he said. He handed me the page. 'If it's him he retired to St Leonards towards the end of his life and was murdered there.'

Lifebuoys

Ragazzi di vita

Seventy-four and walking in the ashen dusk
down to the stretch of canal by the timber yard
in West St Leonards for a chilly assignation

with a twenty-something waiting in the dark
recesses of an abandoned beach hut – I must be
incurable or it's a bluff in which I dare

the things I love, once again, to humiliate me
by coming inside my reasonable world. Plain nature
should be crushed under the wheels of the boy's Fiat,

or strangled and thrown from the bank, to choke
in the weedy canal then wash through the pipe out
into the Channel. I've returned to the strictures

of my youth – St Leonards and the sublime powers
that pull me into their arms. I'm tied up, debased
by the irrational laws of strangers, the dour

rules of desire that I seek out in lifebuoys:
they hold me between floating and drowning
with circular arguments, a loose hole poised

on the edge of a defunct seaside town.
Will he be there? This time will my beaten body
be stopped from speaking on its own?

Allie Voltanino, St Leonards, 1986

We walked back to car. astra's dress looked redder than ever and her Jackie Onassis
sunglasses were saying nothing.

Plan 44 – through obsessive planning

Plan 1 – conjuring trick

Plan 2 – swamp and willow tree

Plan 3 – using a monkey

Plan 4 – on film

Plan 5 – ellipses

Plan 6 – he has reappeared already

Plan 7 – time-space machines

Plan 8 – reincarnation

Plan 9 – from outer space

Plan 10 – brain-in-a-vat

Plan 11 – mask

Plan 12 – we're all Alan Turing already

Plan 13 – puppets

Plan 14 – narrative

Plan 15 – Wittgenstein's beetle

Plan 16 – golem

Plan 17 – from DNA

Plan 18 – with a gesture in a cave

Plan 19 – as the solution to a problem

Plan 20 – hallucination

Plan 21 – biography

Plan 22 – manifestation and doubling

Plan 23 – lucky gonk, mannequin, pose-able doll and similar

Plan 24 – waking sleepy beauty

Plan 25 – through a complex arrangement of mirrors

Plan 26 – closet drama

Plan 27 – hopping vampire

Plan 28 – alien abduction

Plan 29 – figuratively

Plan 30 – automaton

Plan 31 – quantum physics
Plan 31B – quantum physics continued (tunnelling effect)
Plan 32 – through an act of violence
Plan 33 – from 6,000 years ago
Plan 34 – by decryption
Plan 35 – as a blueprint
Plan 36 – using an actor
Plan 37 – coincidence
Plan 38 – cold fusion
Plan 39 – in reaction-diffusion patterns
Plan 40 – it's not Alan Turing that needs to be reanimated
Plan 41 – seashell
Plan 42 – with public money
Plan 43 – missing persons
Plan 44 – through obsessive planning
Plan 45 – from a little bit of everything (wrap party)
Plan 46 – stop planning

INT. PROP WAREHOUSE

BLACK AND WHITE

Vampira picks up a reel of magnetic tape and waves it at Guido.

VAMPIRA

(in West Coast accent)

You know, you can tell any story you want. How about a retro techno-thriller involving some old reel-to-reel? Schlock horror with this giant rubber octopus? Romantic sci-fi with a Van der Graaf generator and Theremin? Fast paced pirate romp with tricorn and scimitar? Tell any story at all...

GUIDO

I don't need more possibilities. I've already planned too many. I can't start a story because as soon as I choose one I lose the others.

Vampira lets the reel of tape drop from her hands onto the concrete floor.

VAMPIRA

Just choose can't you?

GUIDO

But what if I choose wrong?

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM

COLOUR

The room has black and white chequered floor tiles. The walls are covered with gilt-framed mirrors of different shapes and sizes. The room is empty except for a scarlet leather barber's chair in the centre. Guido enters the room.

GUIDO (V.O.)

(whispering)

I enter the examination room...

The barber's chair slowly swivels towards Guido. A hand puppet appears behind the left shoulder of the chair.

MEPHISTO
Sit down please.

Guido climbs into the chair.

MEPHISTO
I'm interested in Return On Investment.
Impact, if you will.
This narrative you're planning.
Would anyone actually pay to read it?

INT. PROP WAREHOUSE
BLACK AND WHITE

Guido looks up at Vampira furtively.

GUIDO
This is it. I'm using this. There's nothing else left.
No invention. No stories. Just the trouble telling them.

VAMPIRA
What the fuck?

GUIDO
I'm already in costume. I'm putting this in.
I'm putting everything in.

Plan 45 – from a little bit of everything (wrap party)

A chance to acknowledge, thank or otherwise apologise to Donald Davidson, the Sugababes, Swampalan_x, Don Quixote, Pierre Menard, Jorge Luis Borges, Papa Legba, Huang Lao, Clive (not Iain) Sinclair, Hamlet, Christopher Morcom, Victoria Sponge, Lily the Pink, Karl, Vlad, Antonio, Krishnamurti, Patriarch Ignatious IX of Kiev, Kuan Yin, Princess Irina Nikolaevna Kasheyev, Picnic Keeble II, Richard Platt, Tim Eagleburger, Andy Johnson, Zachariah Turgood, Abelard Turkelson, Alonzo Church, Jacques Lacan, Ed Wood, Vampira, Guido Anselmi, Pulcinella, Elvis, Dennis Potter, Titania, the Station Master, Simon Leigh, Golalan, Rabbi Löw, Rudolf II, Musette, both Alnz, Zoe from Plainsong, Alan Moore, Doctor Faustus, Christopher Marlowe, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Mephistopheles, Helen, the Homunculus, the Boy Charioteer, the T-complex, Mefauto, Hermanubis, Doctor Fell, Kasperl, John Searle, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Doctor Turning, Belcher Dobson, Laurence Sterne, Jan Švankmajer, Claudia Cardinale, Federico Fellini, Lam Ching Ying,⁵³ Sir Gordon Springlock, Andrzej Nightmare, Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria, Luigi Viti, Nicola Tesla, Zed Cohen, Carlo Vanvitelli, Ferdinand IV of Naples, Ferko Guaril Baxtengro, the Medical Venus, Ada Lovelace, Ezra Pound, Ryder Haggard, James and Spottiswoode, Roger Penrose, Marcello Mastroianni, Totó, Alfredo Bini, Tonino Guerra, Nino Rota, Daniel Dennett, Nick Bostrom, Thomas Nagel, Hilary Putnam, David Chalmers, Michael Polanyi, August Ferdinand Möbius, David Bowie, Fleischmann and Pons, Vicino Orsini, David Hume, Jean Baudrillard, Ulrike Meinhof, the board of executives at Keening Needle Intravene and Payne, Baron Munchausen, the Queen Mother of the West, Richey Manic, Jesus, Lord Lucan, David Lynch, Thomas Hardy, Anne Waldman, JH Prynne, John Ashbery, Charles Olson, Wallace Stevens, James Merrill, Kenneth Koch, astra, Gemma and Pier Paolo Pasolini.

⁵³ Star of the Hong Kong supernatural martial arts film *Mr Vampire*.

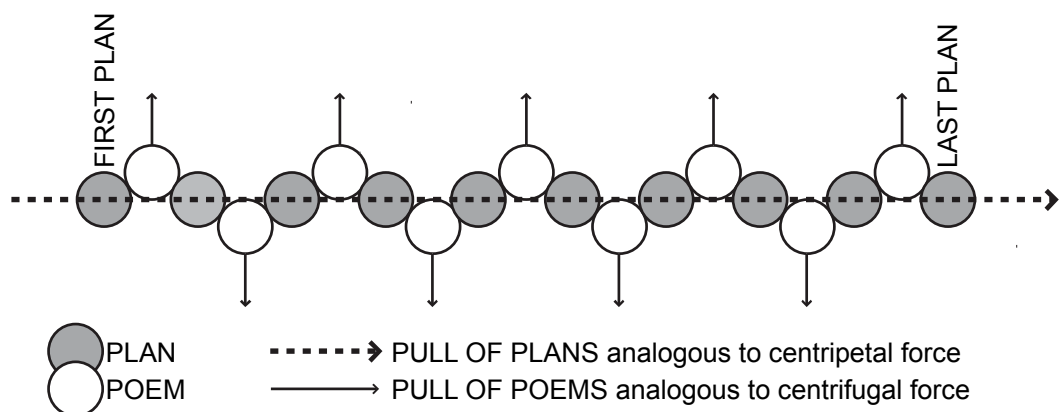
Plan 46 – stop planning

Narrative and seriality

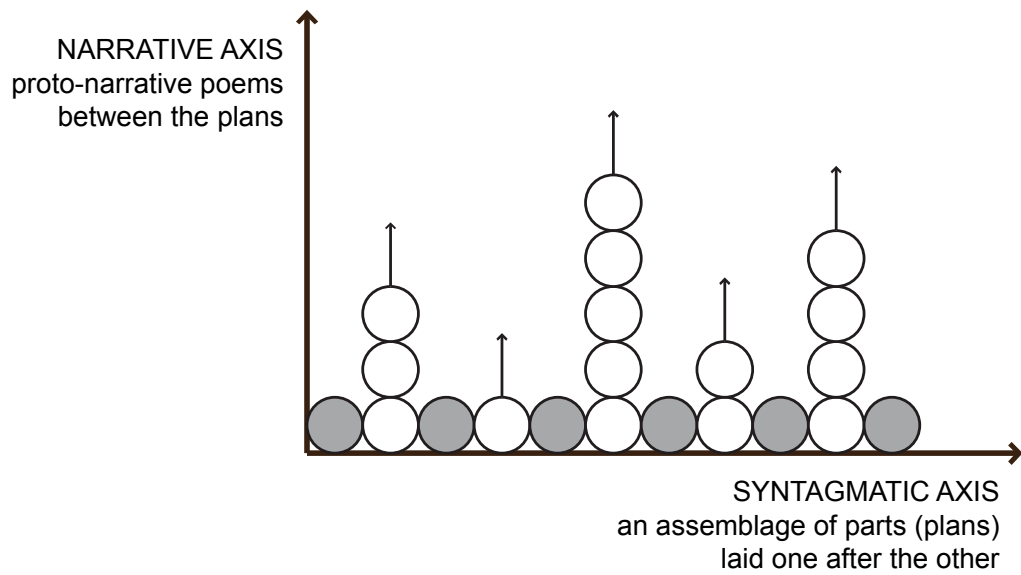
Rational fantasies

I want to examine narrative and non-narrative aspects of the structure of *Reanimating Alan*, but before doing this I need to describe the fantasies that have had a life in parallel to *Reanimating Alan*. These fantasies are schematic rationalisations of what I thought I was creating and what I thought I had created. The fantasies have functioned both as models that predated and underpinned creative work, and as theories through which creative work has been abstracted after completion. The relationship between the fantasies and my creative work has been symbiotic. The fantasies have changed shape over the course of my research. As creative work progressed a process of iteration took place. The fantasies guided creative work but were also changed by creative work. The fantasies, in their final form, may not be the most effective theorisation of my creative work, but the fantasies are significant for the reciprocal influence between their conceptual forms and my creative work. Despite this reciprocal influence there are imperfections in the mapping between the virtual zone of the rational fantasies and the concrete zone of my creative work. The imperfections are sometimes due to a wilful deviation in creative work, sometimes due to difficulty in exerting control over creative work, and sometimes due to the simplifications that are necessary to analysis. The purposes served by the five fantasies, as well as their limitations, will become clear in the discussion that follows.

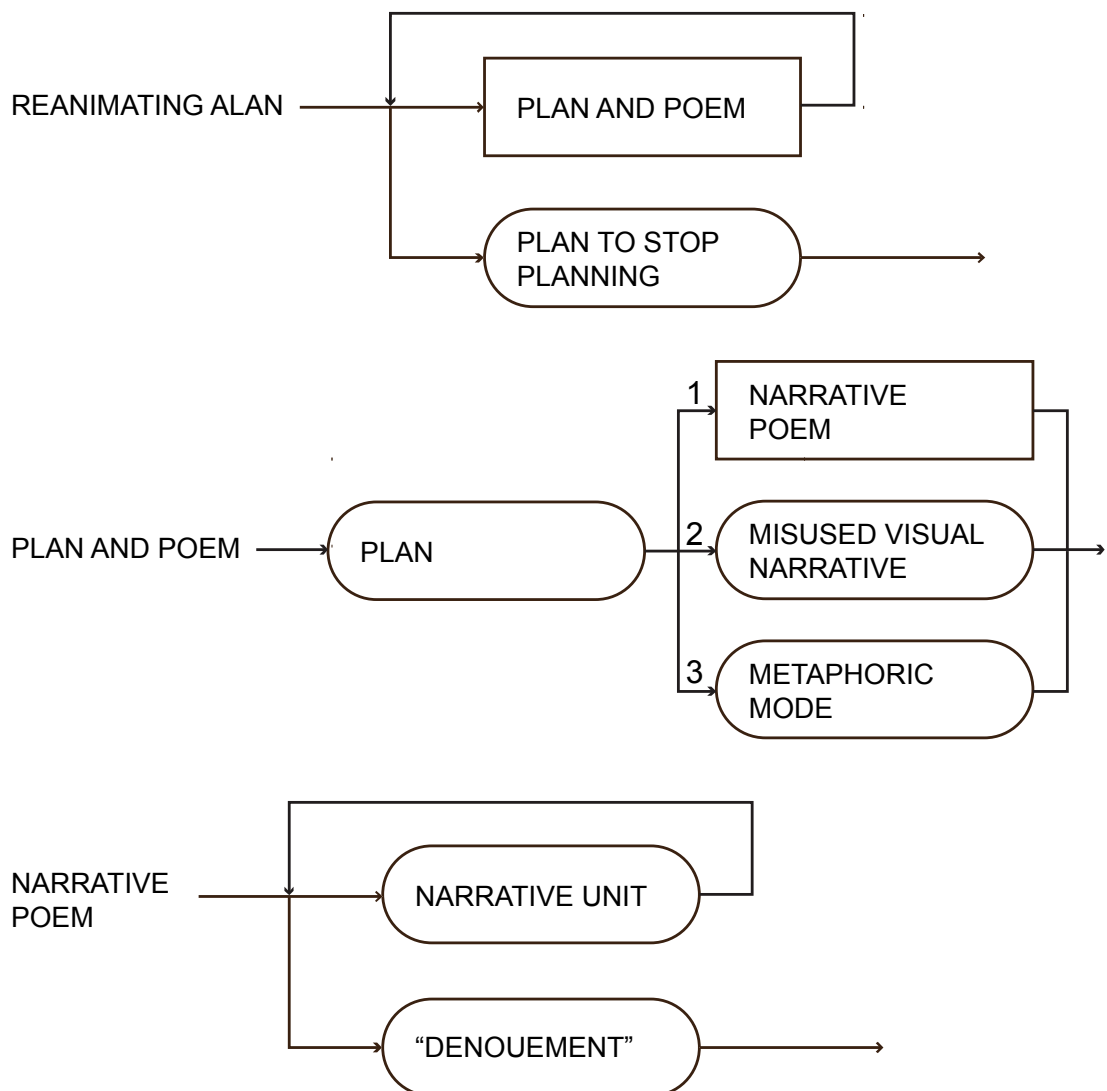
1. Orthogonal forces



2. Axes

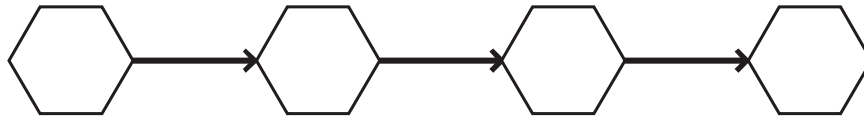


3. Syntax diagrams

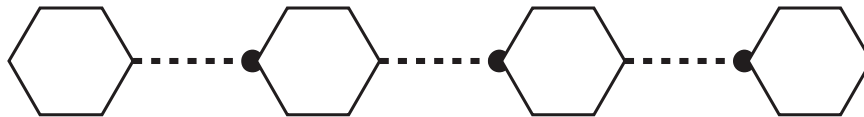


4. Grammar

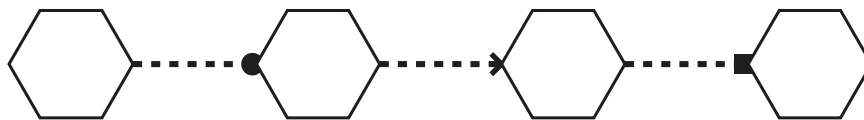
NARRATIVE GRAMMAR



NON-NARRATIVE GRAMMAR



INCOMPLETE OR INCONSISTENT GRAMMAR

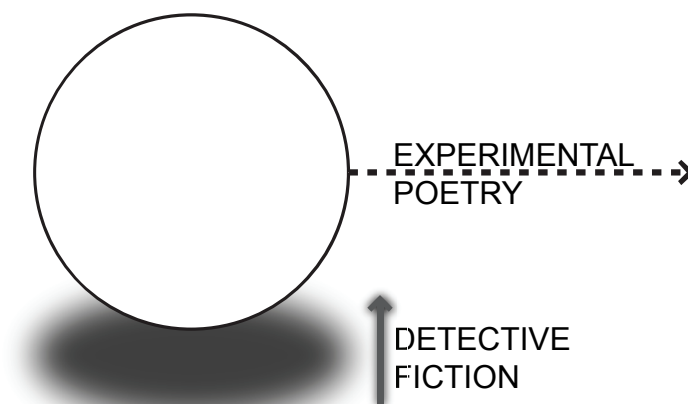


—————→ HYPOTAXIS/SYLLOGISM

- - - - -● PARATAXIS

⬡ UNIT OF TEXT
(sentence, poem, narrative event)

5. Including the project's shadow



Prototyping

My investigation of narrative in *Reanimating Alan* has a number of motivations. Long narrative poems are presently unpopular so I am partly motivated by sheer perversity. I have nostalgia for narrative, perhaps due to a weariness caused by overexposure to the uncritical use of an aesthetic of dissonance and fragmentation. Alternatively my nostalgia may be due to an irritating and anachronistic but ineradicable desire for all-encompassing systems. In the absence of such a system the study of the desire is a surrogate.

The first year of my research was spent testing potential structures for a long narrative poem. I used what is known in software engineering terms as a 'prototyping paradigm' – a process of 'quick design' that involves construction of a provisional system or 'prototype' (Pressman, 1997, pp.35-37). Each prototype, which was like an architect's scale model, could then be assessed, in particular for its scalability. None of these mini-narratives held out promise as grand structures for my whole project and yet each had a facet that reflected the struggle to eke out a narrative in a longer poem. For example, each segment of 'Doctor Turning's cheese machine' (pp.115-122) went inside the subject of the previous segment, reducing the scale. There were only so many segments over which these reductions in scale could be pursued. And yet the idea of a scientific narrative of reduction or of seeking underlying mechanisms had been promising.

In addition, I realised that to select one of the prototypes as the structure for my final creative work would have excluded the greater part of my first year research process from that work, and would present an exemplar narrative as opposed to the search for narrative. So I looked for a non-narrative structure that could contain diverse mini-narratives and thereby present not just the search for narrative but the lack of centre in my practice that makes narrative so problematic. A multiplicity of styles and voices, an attraction to pastiche, and a reluctance to commit – characteristics of my practice – are at odds with stable narrative. To put it in terms

of rational fantasy 2, I looked for a structure that would allow narrative and non-narrative axes to intersect. This structure was provided by *Reanimating Alan*. The series of plans in *Reanimating Alan* were to give little indication of sequence or progression, but were to provide a kind of flattened soil out of which I could attempt to germinate narrative poems or into which I could allow narrative poems to rot down.

Alternative grammars

Parataxis and hypotaxis are grammatical terms used to describe the relationship between clauses. Parataxis refers to clauses whose relationship is co-ordination. Hypotaxis refers to clauses whose relationship is subordination. Predominance of parataxis has been an important feature in distinguishing experimental from mainstream poetry in Britain since the Second World War, according to Mottram (Duncan, 2010). Silliman says much the same as Mottram about distinguishing experimental poetry in America, though Silliman sets out his case more in the form of a manifesto in *The New Sentence* (1987). Parataxis is at the heart of Silliman's conception of the new sentence, according to Perelman, in order that sentences are 'not subordinated to a larger narrative frame' (Perelman, 1993, p.313). A paratactic relationship between successive clauses or sentences limits the 'syllogistic movement' of the text (Silliman, 1987, p.91). This syllogistic movement would otherwise bind sentences into 'larger narrative, expository, and ideological unities' (Perelman, 1993, p.317). Instead, Perelman sees 'tangential relevance' between successive sentences, which heightens the meaning of each individual sentence by increasing its 'degree of separation' from the sentences surrounding it. The use of the terms parataxis and hypotaxis has been extrapolated to refer to units of text on different scales, as well as to different media, so that Perelman feels able to describe parataxis as 'the dominant mode of postindustrial experience.' Although we may still be 'inundated' by 'bursts of narrative', he says, describing advertising in all media, these bursts are assembled paratactically against a 'conglomerate background' (1993, p.313).

In *Reanimating Alan* I have primarily been concerned with parataxis and hypotaxis on a larger scale, taking a unit of text to be a plan, a complete poem, or a poem within a multipart poem, rather than a clause or sentence. Focusing on units of text at this scale has been a matter of choice, but is a choice that I believe is appropriate to a long segmented poem. It remains possible, at the scale of the sentence, to see significant contrasts (in terms of parataxis) from one plan or poem to another. These contrasts have been used to sharpen some of the discontinuities that occur between segments in *Reanimating Alan*, but are not my present focus.

I consider the movement between plans (from one plan to the next) in *Reanimating Alan* to be paratactic due to emphasis on the independence and self-containment of each plan. The complete set of plans is not more important than any individual plan (except that the complete set has an important function in drawing attention to the fact that it is not more important). This results in a softening of the demand that a plan subordinate its integral aesthetic to the aesthetic of the whole. By lacking the arc of a narrative (a meaningful movement through time) the series of plans can continue indefinitely or be rearranged in any order. The movement between each plan and the poem that follows it might also seem to be paratactic: a 'tangential reference' rather than a developmental or cumulative movement. But the consistency of the plans (regular recurrence, reasonably regular length and an element of stylistic consistency) acts as a counterweight to these tangents, as depicted in rational fantasy 1. The movements between the poems that form part of a single multipart poem, as in 'ALN[Z]' (pp.64-69), or between the narrative elements of a narrative poem, as in 'Casting call' (pp.146-148), are more hypotactic: momentary condensations of narrative against a paratactic background, as depicted in the vertical extrusions in rational fantasy 2.

The rules for assembling units of text in *Reanimating Alan* are described in rational fantasy 3. The syntax diagrams describe the rules that govern which type of unit can follow a given sequence of units. Syntax diagrams are one method of defining a grammar – the rules for assembling a linear structure (such as a sentence) one part at a time. Following from this, rational fantasy 4 describes the difference between

hypotaxis and parataxis from an alternative perspective as the difference between a narrative grammar and a non-narrative grammar. In a narrative grammar, units are fully subordinated to the function of the whole and the movement from unit to unit is progressive (syllogistic). But the absence of narrative is not the absence of grammar. A non-narrative grammar may not subordinate units to a greater function (they are more self-contained), but rules governing the movements between units may still be inferred. Absence of grammar would amount to a random collection of units, though it is never possible to be certain that grammar is absent. It is only possible to be certain that there isn't enough information about how units connect in order to deduce a single consistent grammar. The incomplete or inconsistent grammar implies a set of possible grammars that can't be reduced to a single grammar due to a lack of enough examples of how units connect.

One of the benefits of this analysis is that non-narrative is not seen as a mere absence of narrative. Instead, narrative is seen as a special case grammar. The absence of narrative doesn't imply the absence of a grammar that can describe the movement between units of text. Connections between units that seem inconsistent when viewed from the perspective of narrative grammar could be consistent in an alternative grammar. I suggest Perec's *Life a User's Manual* (1987) as an example of a complete non-narrative grammar. Narratives exist on the scale of a chapter but it is probably fair to say that there is no overarching narrative at the scale of the book, despite the recurrence and intersection of several of the themes and incidents (such as the jigsaw). Taking the chapter as a unit of text, there is a clearly defined grammar for the movement from chapter to chapter. It is the movement from room to room in an apartment block, where each room is a chapter and the whole building is the book. It has an exquisitely detailed logic, as adduced by Perec's mathematical pattern for the order in which rooms are to be visited (Brotchie and Mathews, 2005, pp.174-177). The further constraints that are placed on chapters may be partly obscure to a reader, but are nevertheless another testing grammar maintained with Perec's own brand of exactitude.

I would propose Spicer's long serial poem 'Language' (1975, pp.215-243) as an example of an incomplete or inconsistent grammar. In 'Language', the series of poems is subdivided into seven sections. Although some of the titles of the sections are linguistic terms, overall there is no sense of comprehensiveness or order to the set of section titles, no consistent way in which the section titles relate to the poems they contain, and no recognisable key to the movement between successive poems. Although a grammar seems possible (there are tantalising recurrences of theme and form), I don't believe there is enough information from which to extrapolate a grammar. More poems would need to be added to the series (theoretically) before the ordering principles could be understood. There is a potential grammar but all that can be deduced from what is given is a set of possible grammars. The experience for the reader is a sense of being on the brink of surmising the mechanism. If Spicer were to add further units of text, one of the possible grammars might be shown to be the presiding grammar. But a reader might also suppose that were Spicer to add more units of text the ordering principles implied would become no clearer – the series might need to become infinite in extent for its logic to be revealed. In an incomplete or inconsistent grammar it is never possible to know whether a finite number of additional units of text would reveal a grammar or whether the number of units required is infinite (in which case the grammar might be described as uncomputable).

The way Spicer describes his compositional process (Gizzi and Spicer, 1998, pp.53-54) indicates that there is no grammar except the contingency of order of composition. But that does not mean that Spicer's series is necessarily without grammar. Grammar, from a reader's perspective, is affected by knowledge of compositional procedures but not defined by them. Spicer's series of poems has the appearance of being fragmentary quotes from a greater order (the world of his dictating Martians). There is a logic, held in the virtual language of the Martians, that would be visible if only the time and space were available for it to unfold syntagmatically in Spicer's poems. The creation of this semblance of hidden order is, to my mind, part of Spicer's method: although contiguity and contingency seem

to be the organising principles in his conception of the serial poem, I don't believe that all contiguity is necessarily contingent.

As an example of a narrative grammar I would like to consider the particular case of a narrative grammar that has become so finely grained and complex that it can no longer be fully comprehended. Consequently it appears as an incomplete but potential narrative grammar whose key, the reader feels, is always just on the point of being revealed. It is impossible to distinguish a complex narrative that is at the limits of comprehension from a narrative that is genuinely incomplete and exists only in potential. The units of text in these narratives seem self-contained and at the same time laced with inscrutable connections to every other unit of text. Fastidious and compelling expositions of the narrative of *Mulholland Drive* (2001) exist and yet, even with these in mind, the film's narrative remains too complex and its pleasure that of being always on the point of grasping but never quite reaching a virtual narrative to which it alludes. As the film unfolds it persistently gives the impression that a comprehensible narrative grammar is about to resolve around the next corner in the next key scene. And yet the next scene, despite its compelling subordination to the narrative worked out by pundits, seems neither to resolve the grammar nor to cause the sensation that a narrative grammar is absent and the film nothing but a barrage of inexplicable scenes. Each successive scene balances on a knife edge, apparently complexifying the narrative but carrying enough connotation for the reader to think that another slightly more complex resolution still remains available. The patterns imply narrative without delivering narrative – a narrative grammar appears to remain in potential, neither impossible nor actual. McHale describes the situation perfectly in his essay 'Weak Narrativity: The Case of Avant-Garde Narrative Poetry' (2001). The method is 'to evoke narrative coherence while at the same time withholding commitment to it and undermining confidence in it' (2001, p.165). It matters little whether the effect is achieved through an over-complex though coherent narrative (as might be the case with *Mulholland Drive*) or through other means. Such texts are designed to 'trigger our narrative-sensing apparatus', but, as McHale says, 'at the same time that our sense of narrative is being solicited, it is also being frustrated' (2001, p.164). He

seems to suggest that we seek narrative despite ourselves, that there is something almost biological (as the word 'apparatus' makes me think) about our inclination to find its patterns. McHale calls this method of simultaneous solicitation and frustration 'weak narrativity', making an analogy with a philosophy of 'weak thought' developed by the Italian philosopher Vattimo. The analogy proposes that, though we can't avoid seeing narratives everywhere we look, at least by writing and reading 'weak narrativity' we can slowly weaken or work against our inclination, and begin a kind of convalescence (2001, pp.165-166). Such 'weak narrativity' may be achieved through over-complex narrative, allusions to a potential narrative that are never made good, or – to my mind – through incomplete or inconsistent grammars.

In terms of *Reanimating Alan*, 'weak narrativity' perhaps helps best to describe the movement between a plan and the poem that follows it. Because the plan and poem form a self-contained unit (the successive plan clearly sets the bounds of the unit), the movement between plan and poem is underdetermined. This is because there is only one movement (because there are only two constituent units, the plan and the poem), so it is not possible to determine whether the logic is narrative/syllogistic in some way or syntagmatic/tangential. To resolve the question the movement between plan and poem in one plan-poem unit can be compared with the movements in all other units, leading to an understanding of the movement based on similarity and difference to the movements in other plan-poem units. This allows that some plan-poem movements are more (potentially) narrative than others. The plan-to-poem movements are the point of intersection between the flat paratactic logic of successive plans and the narratives that attempt to emerge in the poems, so it makes sense that this intersection is a liminal zone of weak narrativity. Although the logic of how a poem follows a plan can't be deduced, some connection between a plan and poem is just about discernible in every case. The more self-evident connections between plans and poems foster credulity in the reader, I believe: a sensitivity or willingness to look for and make connections between a plan and its poem. This sensitising of what McHale calls 'apparatus' can't occur when all connections are self-evident and no work is required to find

patterns. Nor can it occur if a reader is resigned to thinking grammar is absent. By sensitising the apparatus that looks for the patterns of narrative there is a greater chance that a reader becomes aware of the autonomous function of this apparatus. Once the desire to see patterns of narrative-like connection has been woken, it is hard to put it back to sleep. The moment of waking is analogous to the moment when a reader sees a 'Magic Eye' picture in three dimensions: the magic eye picture in *Reanimating Alan*, 'Under a Manchester railway arch' (p.28), contains the word NARRATIVE floating on top of the background. Once a narrative is seen, the tendency is for everything to be drawn in and become a part of it – much as the literary theorist Fry describes the effect of the jar on the landscape of Tennessee in Stevens' poem 'Anecdote of the Jar' (Stevens, 1965, p.27). The jar, placed on the ground, becomes an arbitrary centre that organises the chaotic sprawl of nature around it (Fry, 2012, p.127).

This liminal zone – formed at the intersection between the forays into narrative poems and the flat series of plans – is what created a space for experiment on the fringes of narrative in *Reanimating Alan*. But I felt that the series of plans also needed definitive opposition. A longer, sustained and traditional narrative was needed in place of a poem after one of the plans so that the vertical axis of narrative was properly calibrated. Throughout this project, I tested my approaches to practice-based research by comparing them with an equal and opposite creative writing research project, a shadow project carried out by a shadow researcher, which I imagined to involve the writing of genre detective fiction, as depicted in rational fantasy 5. One of the uses of experimental poetry and its disassembly of narrative is, to my mind, the opportunity to include what lies on the outside of traditional narratives. But one of the things that lies on the outside of experimental poetry is traditional narrative. The long prose section 'The subject supposed to write' (pp.168-205) is an attempt to include this shadow research in my project. Not only does it calibrate the narrative axis, I also found the assuredness of genre fiction a useful contrast to the anxieties of poetry, which helped to clarify poetry's specific contribution in practice-based research. The shadow researcher is freed from the fretfulness of poetry to be able to enjoy the productiveness that comes from

dwelling in what the literary theorist Conte calls the 'seamless logic' and 'smooth transitions' of narrative progression (1991, p.23). The appearance of this shadow distorts the series of plans, but the distortion is mitigated by the way in which 'The subject supposed to write' helps to reflect on my research and its contradictions. I had Kristeva's crime novels, such as *Murder in Byzantium* (2006), in my mind in using 'The subject supposed to write' in this way. Nevertheless, the distortion is enough to raise the possibility that, from the point of view of 'The subject supposed to write', the rest of *Reanimating Alan* is either elaborately framed or an elaborate framing. 'The subject supposed to write' fights against the point of view of the series of plans, in which it is just another in a series of narratives whose will to totalise is being controlled by the act of repeated planning. 'The subject supposed to write' is also a reversal of the series of plans in another way: a set of poems emerges within in that are freed from any requirement to engage with narrative, and consequently fall into playful pastiche.

Seriality

In an essay discussing the long poem, Conte contrasts the epic form and the serial form, as opposed to the narrative form and serial form. It is an important distinction – despite the 'non-narrative' nature of Olson's *The Maximus Poems* (1983), Conte believes it is nevertheless epic, concerned to make a 'universal statement' or to 'create a world'. This makes *The Maximus Poems* narrative, Conte implies, not in the sense of there being hypotactic progression through its components, but in its desire to establish a system, its aim at 'summation' and 'completion'. Conte's contrast is the serial form, which remains 'deliberately incomplete'. The definition and practice of the serial poem began in the late 40s and 50s in discussions between poets Spicer, Duncan and Blaser. It was to be a form 'without the narrative *telos* of the epic' but as much in reaction against the 'well-made lyric' as against the 'gravitational attraction' of the epic that subjugated all the material it collected (Conte, 1992).

The serial poem, according to Conte, with the 'discontinuity of its elements' and their 'resistance to determinate order', is distinct from the 'thematic unity, narrative progression, or meditative insistence' that characterizes a sequence. Conte describes the sequence (whether overtly narrative or not) as 'hypotactic', as opposed to a series, whose elements are paratactic: the elements of a series are 'autonomous' and related through simple 'contiguity'. Where the sequence is a 'narrative discourse' that creates the illusion of smooth 'linear and continuous' movement, the series is disjunctive, always moving away from a central axis (1991, pp.21-23). Conte's analysis is a problem when I consider *Reanimating Alan*. I would describe the plans as a series since each plan is 'autonomous' and the set of plans resists 'determinate order'. However the plans do have 'thematic unity': the operation of reanimation. Not only that but the plans are not a centrifugal force pulling away from a central axis, as Conte would expect from elements in a serial form. On the contrary, as I have depicted in *rational fantasy 1*, the plans provide a backbone, a centripetal force that anchors the centrifugal movements of the narratives in the poems. Perhaps I am underestimating the extent to which a 'thematic unity' in the plans is making them less disjunctive, but it is hard to credit this when I glance at the index of plans in 'Plan 44 – through obsessive planning' (pp.206-207) and see such jarring discontinuities as between quantum physics and an act of violence, reincarnation and outer space, or Wittgenstein's beetle and golems. Alternatively, the centripetal force of the plans might be coming from the implication of a consistent planner or from some formal consistency in the plans.

While I appreciate that the combinatory assemblage of parts that forms a serial poem will usually convey a sense of disjunction and incompleteness at odds with the epic, I believe that it can also, paradoxically, allude to a scheme at least as grand as anything that can be realised in the epic. From a Saussurean point of view the (grammatical) combination of parts (poems) to create fragments of speech (a serial poem) along the axis of *parole* implies a virtual whole, the theoretical closed system of *langue* on the vertical axis (Fry, 2012, pp.136-143). The combination of parts to form a series can't, in my view, escape this implication of a vertical language from which its parts have been drawn down. If the term 'grammar'

describes the rules for the serial combination of parts, then the most that can be said is that different grammars sketched across the x-axis will imply different language networks on the y-axis. The contiguous elements that comprise a narrative will imply a different kind of language object than the contiguous elements that comprise a serial poem. As I have already suggested, perhaps it is worth considering a narrative grammar as a special case grammar, and the absence of narrative as implying a different (non-narrative) kind of language on the y-axis. For a reader of the series of plans in *Reanimating Alan* a language emerges that can define possible missing plans, just as, perhaps, in *Jane Eyre* a language emerges that can define a possible missing narrative, such as in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Three types of narrative poem in *Reanimating Alan*

In rational fantasy 3, I imagine that the poems that occur between plans can be divided into three categories: narrative poem, misused visual narrative and metaphoric mode. I wouldn't like to force this categorisation onto every poem but I believe the categorisation helps to describe how I pursued my ambition to make the poems between the plans test narrative in some way. The poems in the first category, 'narrative poem', were the prototypes from my first year of research. They are longer poems, usually constructed as a sequence, with an overt narrative element. They include 'ALN[Z]' (pp.64-69), 'Doctor Turning's cheese machine' (pp.115-122) and 'Casting call' (pp.146-148). The second category is 'misused visual narrative'. The poems in this category have a visual element and will be described in detail in the next section of the thesis, 'Narrative and science' (p.229). The third category is 'metaphoric mode' into which I would place many of the shorter poems, such as 'The garden path' (p.143), 'The algorithm men' (p.45) and 'I didn't imagine the new sign' (p.80). The questions of why certain poems might fit in this category and in what way 'metaphoric mode' could be described as a form of narrative are ones I would like to explore with the help of an analysis by Conte in *Unending Design* (1991) in his discussion of the finite serial forms.

Metaphor has been the traditional mode of language for those poets, from Coleridge to Eliot, who aspire to a comprehensive view of the world; they are able, as Oppen claims, to find an analogue for anything. The circumference of their perception is coextensive with the world, and their esemplastic imagination, with which they scope the field of similarities, is located at the focus of one great circle. The 'vehicles' of each metaphor orbit the central 'tenor,' held by the centripetal force of the poet's imagination. This metaphoric mode of language is especially suited to the single, well-made lyric. (Conte, 1991, p.130)

The 'metaphoric mode' produces, I suggest, a form of narrative in that it is a work of 'esemplastic imagination' – as with Conte's description of the epic, the 'metaphoric mode' produces a kind of 'universal statement' or 'summation', or at least implies the capacity to 'find an analogue for anything'. It may not play out a particular plot within its confines, but it relies upon an overarching narrative that the reader recognises. The well-made lyric, I believe Conte hints, has similar ambition to the epic, albeit wrapped up in a brief epiphany (the moment of discovery of an analogue). The well-made lyric, as with the epic, harbours a desire to subordinate everything in the circle of its perception to its world view, as could be said to occur in Stevens' 'Anecdote of the Jar'. The contrasting mode of language, says Conte, is metonymical and its exemplar is the serial poem in which 'contiguity' best describes the syntagmatic unfolding of its elements. Each element in the series can be thought of as being semi-autonomous and on the periphery, its energy directed outwards and 'not directed toward a central poetic ego' (1991, pp.130-131).

In *Healing Fiction* the post-Jungian psychologist Hillman describes a sense of self as a collection of stories – no more or less than a successful act of self (and corporate) narration. Our gods, says Hillman, 'are in the way we use words to persuade ourselves about ourselves, how we tell what happened next and answer the question *why*' (1983, pp.23-24). The strength of the sense of self must be proportionate to its ability to subordinate (give narrative meaning to) events. In a

well-made lyric the temporal element of narrative (the contiguous events to which narrative gives meaning) is often reduced to an epiphany. The myth of the well-made lyric is, I believe, that the epiphany does not occur during the process of composition, but lies outside language. But perhaps the well-made lyric is actually a fleeting glimpse of a vast symbolic order built from thousands of extended narrations that are taken as read, and which each metaphor references.

The short poems in *Reanimating Alan* that I have placed in the category of 'metaphoric mode' are my attempts at well-made lyrics. But I found it entertaining to try using subject matter that worked against the idea of the well-made lyric. For example, 'The garden path' (p.143) challenges the search for authenticity, replacing it with a black void. The epiphany in 'I didn't imagine the new sign' (p.80) is of the alienation of sign referring to sign referring to sign. 'Inhaling the sea air, Alan felt much better immediately' (p.25) describes a disjunctive method of reading. And in 'Windup robots in five colours' people are replaced by robots, depriving narrative events of their meaning. I also made a connection between Hillman's description of the role of narrative in the construction of the self and the attempt to reanimate Turing. I equate the attempt to produce narrative poems (in any category) with the attempt to reanimate (if reanimations are taken as attempts to reconstruct the self through narrative). But I worked against my own project – I would seem to have wanted reanimation to fail. As well as playing with subject matter that works against the well-made lyric, I placed narrative poems in a series of plans that prevented any one narrative becoming all-encompassing. My rationale is two-fold. I am interested in the cusp, the zone in which narrative has the potential to subjugate everything but is somehow held in abeyance. And I am concerned that a fall into easy narratives risks uncritical acceptance of the celebration of Turing, something I discuss further in 'Narrative and biography' (p.253).

Close-up on the continuous line

In the fifth volume of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, in a well-known interlude, the narrator pauses to consider his narrative trajectories over the first four volumes. He draws out the narratives as squiggly lines that represent the digressions, flashbacks and other devices through which he has deviated from the 'moral rectitude' of the straight line (2004, pp.377-378). In a transcript of Spicer's Vancouver Lectures, Spicer describes an idea of Robin Blaser's: 'Robin Blaser once said in talking about a serial poem that it's as if you go into a room, a dark room, the light is turned on for a minute, then it's turned off again, and then you go into a different room where a light is turned on and off' (Gizzi and Spicer, 1998, p.55). The contrast between Sterne and Spicer/Blaser is the 'seamless logic' of narrative. With Sterne there is the uninterrupted flow of the line, representing narrative – Tristram's pen never leaves the page. With Spicer/Blaser there seems to be the lack of any linking principle between successive rooms, other than the fact that they lie next to each other. If Tristram were to draw a serial poem it would be with a chain of inky splodges. In *Reanimating Alan* I have attempted to reconcile these ideas, to find a place where narrative and seriality can meet, where narrative is interrupted but disjunction is never complete. A visual reconciliation occurs within *Reanimating Alan* in 'A bestiary of biography' (p.83). The diagrams in 'A bestiary of biography' maintain Tristram's horizontal axis (which may represent no more than the reader's syntagmatic movement through the text) while being constructed from arrangements of autonomous units. This fusion – of axial continuity and self-contained units – doesn't manage to map out the relationship between narrative and serial forms in *Reanimating Alan*, but at least recapitulates some of the problems expressed in my rational fantasies. Perhaps the sharp distinction between narrative and serial forms is a false one, resulting simply from the lack of an adequate model. The continuous line of a narrative could be no more than a sequence of self-contained units – of dots – that are small enough and close enough together to give the illusion of a line, as when the unit of text is the sentence and the movement between sentences is relatively hypotactic.

Narrative and science

Three cross-sections

When I was fourteen I was told off at school for writing a short story using a word I didn't understand to describe the relationship between two characters. In fact I did understand the word 'immiscible', but not through precocious erudition. I had borrowed the word from a chemistry lesson where it had been used to describe oil and water. It was a first experience of interdisciplinarity. Although I didn't set out writing *Reanimating Alan* with the problem of the relationship between science and literature at the forefront of my mind, the relationship has, inescapably, formed the canvas on which *Reanimating Alan* is painted. Now that I reflect on the writing I see the texture of that canvas showing through the paint, sometimes more, sometimes less, but across its whole surface.

Any conception of the relationship between science and literature is entangled with recent cultural history. I started studying electronics and computer science at the same time as the big bang in the stock exchange. I was studying for a Certificate in Education at the same time as cultural studies was becoming mainstream. I remember the course leader, an avid social constructivist, and I were arguing with someone she called an unreconstructed modernist. We were arguing for the illusory nature of the self, as a construction, a *trompe l'oeil*, a side effect. Caused by what, asks the unreconstructed modernist. We both reply at the same time. 'It's historical,' she says. 'It's biological,' I say. We were an unlikely pair to be on the same side. We looked at each other in surprise and incomprehension. I was so incredulous at her answer that I started reading Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

In this section, 'Narrative and science', I want to consider how the relationship between science and literature figures in *Reanimating Alan*. I will do this by taking three cross-sections. There are an infinite number of ways to take cross-sections of

a text. Every different way of cutting up the corpse equates to a different perspective. I am trying to make three cuts that will help expose the relationship between science and literature in *Reanimating Alan*. One cut principally examines techniques in the visual poems. Another cut considers use of constructed languages. And the last cut explores how science may be mediating between contemporary mainstream and experimental poetry in *Reanimating Alan*.

Détournement in visual poems

It is an easy first step to cut away what isn't happening in *Reanimating Alan*. As a whole it does not seem to be a celebration of science, a condemnation of science, a description or explanation of science, or a fictionalised history of science or a scientist. Given this absence of straightforward celebration or condemnation some of the friendly mockery that science receives warrants investigation.

There are a number of more or less comic strategies used in *Reanimating Alan* – the strategy I want to consider is particularly prominent in the poetry that has a visual component. In my view it relies on a method that is an extension of the method Debord and Wolman describe in their theory of détournement.

Debord and Wolman describe détournement as a method that involves appropriating fragments of signal from various communication media (film, image, phrase) and using them in new combinations in a new context. The effect of recombination and new context on the fragments causes the 'mutual interference of two worlds' (1956). Though the meaning of the appropriated fragments is already changed by the recombination and change of context, there is no reason, say Debord and Wolman, why the fragments have to be represented accurately like a citation. Détournement, says Debord, is 'the opposite of quotation' (1967). The fragments can be freely distorted after appropriation. Debord and Wolman call détournement a 'parodistic' method and consequently easy to use for 'comical effects' (1956). It is distinct from parody in that re-contextualisation and

combination are not necessary to parody and are not strictly about imitation. Debord and Wolman define two categories of 'detourned elements'. The first is 'minor' in which the detourned element 'has no importance in itself', such as an extract from a newspaper article. The second is 'deceptive', in which the detourned element is familiar, such as the image of the Mona Lisa (1956).

The *détournement* I am going to describe in a number of poems with visual components in *Reanimating Alan* doesn't fit perfectly with Debord and Wolman's theory. To make the distinction as boldly as I can, I would say the detourned elements in these poems are not semantic content (fragments of signal) but are formal syntax (the method of encoding in the signal), that is to say, the linguistic structures through which the content is mediated. These linguistic structures are visual and provide the visual language of the poems. To take a Saussurean perspective, the detourned element is the implied *langue* as opposed to *parole*. Debord and Wolman describe detourning an existing syntagm by recontextualising and combining it with other detourned syntagms. In contrast I am saying that some of these visual poems detourn an implied language by using it to create new syntagms in an unfamiliar context. Or stated simply, with all the risks that distinguishing form and content implies, perhaps the detourned elements are forms as opposed to content.

The best example is 'Universal poem machine' (p.31). The poem uses the language of the electronic circuit diagram, but it does not use a particular real circuit diagram that expresses some electronic function. It is a misuse of the language because the language is supposed to be used within constraints that allow it to be transparent, unambiguous and able to be reified. The language of the circuit diagram is not only moved into the domain of poetry (re-contextualised) but is combined with elements of literary discourse. This combination multiplies the possible readings of the poem – for instance, as a satire of a clumsy intrusion into the humanities by science, of a certain kind of contemporary poetics, of the enterprise of poetics itself, or as a merely playful use of the circuit diagram in the spirit of 'code poetry' (Humphrey, 2001). In the section of this thesis called 'Narrative and seriality'

(p.212) I described how I had categorised visual poems like 'Universal poem machine' as 'narrative' because they borrow authoritative narratives from some extraneous discourse. In this case it is the authoritative narrative of the circuit diagram, an authority that commands certainty and function. What is done with the authority is debatable – it may be undermined, bolstered, integrated, tested, rejected or complexified. Debord and Wolman would say it has been subverted.

In a similar fashion 'Reaction-diffusion' (p.154) detourns the growth of bacteria in agar in a Petri dish. It is not a particular growth pattern that is detourned but the language of the growth patterns that a bacteriologist reads. It is hard to see how either this detourned element or the detourned elements in 'Universal poem machine' fit with Debord and Wolman's categories of 'minor' or 'deceptive'. The circuit diagram and the image of bacterial growth in a circular dish are familiar enough to be 'deceptive' and yet are 'minor' in that what is detourned is not a single iconic statement in their respective languages. Rather it is the languages themselves that are detourned by being used to express something that does not lie within the parameters of what the languages can usually express in their appropriate contexts. As with 'Universal poem machine' the bacterial growth is combined with elements of literary discourse (in both the titles and the text that is in the process of growing on the dishes) creating an unnatural, concrete and somehow inelegant juxtaposition of the scientific and the literary. The way that the two disciplines meet in the poem could be as much a subversion of the literary as the scientific. Elements from both disciplines are combined (though the visual elements are from science) in a 'cheap' way that can 'break through Chinese walls of understanding' (Debord and Wolman, 1956). In combining elements that have been recontextualised, in this case, from two disciplines, each element helps to detourn the other.

This process of combining elements makes me think of the psychoanalytic concept of condensation. Detouring briefly into analytical psychology, I'm reminded of drawings by Sebastian Brant, reproduced in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (Jung, 1981, plates 1 and 2). The drawings are described by Jung as condensations of elements

that can't be reconciled intellectually. Perhaps *Mysterium Coniunctionis* is a surprisingly fitting text. Jung describes the condensations in terms of *unio mentalis*, an alchemical process seeking unification. In *Reanimating Alan* interdisciplinarity has taken the place of alchemical process. I have included a quote from Jung on Brant's art in the footnotes to *Reanimating Alan*, but in summary Jung describes 'grotesque condensations and overlappings of contradictory contents' that have 'no regard for our aesthetic or religious feelings'. These 'products' don't spring from 'the perverse inventive gifts of the author', but from a 'melting down' which is not, according to Jung, a destructive process, but is both an early stage of 'assimilation' and an expression of the 'relativisation' of traditional truths (1981, pp.324-325). The 'freakishness' of this type of condensation reaches its apex, perhaps, in two poems in *Reanimating Alan*, the crudely titled 'Taoist talisman based on Von Neumann architecture' (p.105), an insensitive, forced fusion of the traditional Taoist talisman and a generic representation of the Von Neumann computer architecture, and 'Symbolic proteins etched on limestone' (p.74). However I do not believe these two poems use the kind of *détournement* I have been describing. It should be useful to consider why.

The visual element in 'Symbolic proteins etched on limestone', which is separate to its textual element, has turned electrical symbols and the chemical structure of amino acid into distant allusions among a set of repeating symbols that are somewhat reminiscent of the voodoo *vévé*. I consider this visual allusion to have taken the place of *détournement*. The chemical structure and the nod in the direction of voodoo seem figurative – the language of chemical structure is not being subverted (as might be expected in the kind of *détournement* I've described). Instead a particular chemical structure is appearing in the cloak of the *vévé* and vice versa. The amino acid and *vévé* are forced into conversation. The *vévé* is a religious symbol drawn preceding voodoo rituals. The *vévé* design is intended to attract a particular spirit. The symbols would seem here to be designed to attract, if anything, an artificial intelligence, an inhabiting sentience for the machine. An attempt to generate the electrical spark that is required to flick across these symbols (and their electrical components) occurs in the accompanying text. The

text is catalyst to the summoning of the sentience by the symbols. The text forces together a number of opposite charges (voltage is an expression of the difference between two poles). In this close and uncomfortable proximity a spark is sure to fly between opposite poles. All that the primordial soup required as catalyst to initiate the formation of self-replicating chemical structures was, scientists speculate, the occasional bolt of lightning – that same lightning harnessed by Dr Frankenstein. Here the sparks are catalyst to sentience. The poem has a literalist mode of perception that is sometimes associated with schizophrenia (Schuldberg and Sass, 1999, p.510) and reminds me of an anecdote about an experiment undertaken by someone with schizophrenia. In associating the tea ceremony with Far Eastern spirituality and the pipe with Native American (Western) spirituality, his attempt at interdisciplinarity (as well as combining his two greatest pleasures) involved making tobacco tea. This literalism in 'Symbolic proteins etched on limestone' doesn't produce the subversion of détournement, but offers a naive kind of syncretism, which I believe is why its method seems to be allusion rather than détournement.

These heavy-handed fusions are the subject of commentary in 'Plan 38 – cold fusion' (p.151). This plan describes the fusion as being between science and the occult. The substitution of literature for the occult is something I will consider later in this section. The suggestion that the fusion is cold (room temperature) might express lack of preparation, a lack of rigorous intellectual heat, an emotive coldness, a lack of consideration for biographical sensitivities, as well as the idea that the fusion is pre-emptive. It is a fusion that may become possible in the future but at present can only be hinted at in these base or 'cheap' manipulations. In his essay 'Poetry and Virtual Realities' (Crawford, 2006, pp.27-47) Morgan discusses MacDiarmid's search for a 'perfect fusion' of science and art in poetry, a 'fusion that is hard to obtain'. Success, according to Morgan, is partly to be ascribed to the reversibility of metaphors. This occurs when it is hard to determine in a MacDiarmid poem whether a scientific process operates as a metaphor for an emotional insight, or whether the insight is a metaphorical exposition of scientific process (Crawford, 2006, pp.33-35). In these instances MacDiarmid succeeds in refusing to put one discipline at the service of another. The 'cold fusion' that takes place in *Reanimating*

Alan may lack the urbanity of well-conceived reversible metaphors but manages to use a comparable reversibility to avoid creating a hierarchy of disciplines.

Returning to *détournement*, I wish to identify further examples of poems in *Reanimating Alan* with detoured scientific visual elements. I am looking for poems where one of the detoured elements could be described as an implied scientific *langue* that has its own system of visual representation. This is distinct from detoured elements that fit directly with Debord and Wolman's theory by making use of a fragment of speech or *parole* from a visual scientific language. 'Standard genetic code' (pp.47-48) misuses a standardised tabular format that is usually used to associate elements of genetic code with proteins. The misuse associates elements of genetic code with noun phrases that construct two fleeting and incomplete bodies, questioning their similarity and difference. The detoured visual language in 'A bestiary of biography' (p.83) is harder to attribute with certainty but might be that of the molecular chemist. 'Solip Central' (pp.39-43), for the most part, misuses the mathematical language of two-dimensional graphing. Finally, there is 'Notes on Being Thought' (pp.17-22) in which the diagrams don't seem to fit with any rigorous visual scientific language. I mention it because I believe its schematic representations typical of business management or systems architecture amount to misuse of a familiar and definitively technical-rational visual language.

I am inclined to think that the detouring in the schematics in 'Notes on Being Thought' is the strongest of any of those so far mentioned. But this is hard to qualify based on Debord and Wolman's four 'laws' of *détournement*. The most effective detoured elements, they say, are the 'most distant' (law 1) and are 'as simplified as possible' (law 2) (1956). However 'Notes on Being Thought' seems less simple because it makes use of a less distinct visual language. Its detoured elements also seem less distant due to the high number of disciplines in which technical-rational diagramming is found. Additionally, none of the *détournements* in the visual elements of any of the poems being discussed are close to a 'rational reply' (law 3) or a 'simple reversal' (law 4), which Debord and Wolman see as being the least effective (1956). Debord and Wolman also believe that the distortions

introduced into the detourned elements should be as few as possible because the recollection of the original context is important to their function. However this would make 'Notes on Being Thought' a weaker example since the original context (the domain of the original language) is the hardest to recollect because it is the one that is least well defined. Perhaps the success of the visual elements in 'Notes on Being Thought' is precisely because they do not detourn a highly specialised language with which a reader may only be passingly familiar. In contrast the generic rational schematic is something encountered almost every day in a wide range of contexts – the attempt to order a chaotic world by constructing a model of discrete components, literally to schematize, is a learned reaction to disorder for many people. The fact that the visual language of this type of schematic is not rigorous, unlike, for example, the language of the circuit diagram, does not undermine the technical-rational ambition of the language.

What do these poems achieve that can be attributed to *détournement*? For Debord and Wolman *détournement* is initially a provocation – to anger or mockery – that is designed to be subversive. If subversion of an existing order or of an authority associated with a dominant narrative is in any way constructive then its aim is transformation – its function is like radical critical theory. Debord and Wolman even describe *détournement* as a 'weapon' in a 'real class struggle' (1956). I would conclude that the 'parodistic' attacks of their *détournements* on 'culture as defined by the ruling class' must come to define an oppressed other. I am left asking myself what the oppressed other might be in these visual poems in *Reanimating Alan*. I will return to the question later in this section. It is also necessary to mention the role assigned to the parodic in postmodernity, summarised by the philosopher Kearney as a means to assert the absence of any single authority or origin. Kearney, in his history of imagination, *The Wake of the Imagination* (1988), sees the 'parodic imagination' as bent on a 'deconstruction of the category of "origin" '. The idea of origin is replaced by 'labyrinthine mirror-play' and 'mechanically reproducible surfaces without depth or interiority' in which copies only reference other copies (Kearney, 1988, pp.253-254). In this description I can see the replication of Alan Turing in the multiple reanimations that take place in *Reanimating Alan*. They

question the existence of an original Alan Turing and question how the authenticity of a reanimation could be tested. But Kearney's description of the parodic imagination doesn't specifically account for any achievement of my détournements of visual languages. Instead the flattening effect of parody that Kearney describes seems to work against the capacity for subversion (and therefore transformation) that Debord and Wolman find in détournement. Perhaps the problem is that by detourning elements of specialised knowledge in these poems I imply a position outside that knowledge, and yet the effect of the détournement can only be understood by those with some inside knowledge. These readers are required to believe in the power of some of the specialisms that are detoured in order for them to be able to take time off for a prudent self-mockery.

It might be suggested that these poems with detoured visual elements are attempts to relativise or narrativise sciences, and that the humour is no more than a result of the frantic play of extreme relativism – hysterical laughter at the spectacle that conceals the void. But this does not quite account for their effect, in particular, for what I believe is the friendliness of their mockery – a friendliness adduced, in places, by the spurious rigour with which the scientific languages are misused. As examples of this rigour I would pick out, 'Universal poem machine' and 'What the code means is not in Alan' (from 'Notes on Being Thought'), though in the latter it is the textual element of the poem that I believe displays 'spurious rigour' in its misuse of Boolean algebra.

This friendliness owes something to a phenomenon that Beer describes in 'Translation or Transformation?' in her essay collection *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter* (1996, pp.173–195). Technical languages 'keep non-professionals out', says Beer, but with good reason – 'precise conceptual exchange and continuance.' The price of this is 'effective secrecy', even 'mandarin enclosure' (1996, p.183). To misuse a technical language with any apparent insight into the language is to mark oneself as something of an insider. Self-mockery feels different to mockery. An insider isn't interested in relativising science, they are engaged in play, perhaps even the double bluff of de-relativising the literary – a sly pre-emptive

de-relativising that comes ahead of the application of some new scientific theory that will attempt a systematic de-relativising. The placing of technical languages in proximity with elements of literary theory may have this amusing effect for a scientist, though it must be remembered that literary theory is a technical language as well. Technical language is a Masonic handshake and the more rigorous or obscure the language the more priestly the fluent speaker appears to be. In a sense it is an entry test, which grants entrance and permits (defines) the in-joke. No writing in *Reanimating Alan* better exemplifies this cosyng-up to an inner circle than 'Plan 31B – quantum physics tunnelling effect' (p.125) where a joke (based on a literal-minded misunderstanding) is reliant on what I believe to be a reasonable exposition of the somewhat arcane tunnelling effect – though there is no détournement here. Beer describes Latour and Woolgar as 'comic versions of the naive observer' (1996, p.182), unable to comprehend technical languages of sign and gesture in laboratory research. The comic element I am describing in *Reanimating Alan* is the opposite. But I suggest it is also open to more readings. It can be both the irreverence on the outside of an ivory tower or the self-deprecating sleight of hand of the insider, irrespective of whether the reader feels there is science going on in the ivory tower or some occult literary practice.

It has been difficult to find contemporary visual poetry that uses exactly this kind of détournement. I would place the majority of visual poems in two categories. The first is experiment with typography and script. Its roots are in the advertising-influenced 'free-word poetry' of Italian Futurism. It includes the concrete poetry of the sixties and seventies, such as that by Morgan (2000, pp.12-13) and Cobbing (1966), which focused on the materials of production, the typesetter and typewriter (and later, software). There are many contemporary poets, including Sneyd (1996) and Davenport (2012), producing work that falls into this category. Sneyd experiments with hand-written text in sprawling patterns ordered by the spidergram and Davenport uses the spreadsheet as the field in which he applies geometric transformations to text. Most of my own previous visual poems fall into this category.

The second category of visual poems owes more to Debord and Wolman's détournement. Textual sources are collaged in their original material forms so they appear as untranscribed cut up. Sometimes the range of sources is widened to include non-textual sources. Before the possibility of cheap reproduction with photocopier or scanner/printer, work like this would more likely have been considered visual art and would have been encountered by a reader without reproduction or as photographic reproductions. Visual poems by Loydell, such as *Make Poetry History* (2006) and *Without* by Loydell and Gillies (2010), are good examples. It is not possible, I think Debord and Wolman would agree, for the material use of a source in such a poem to be mere allusion or reference without the subversive effect of détournement also being present.

Besides these two categories there is a certain amount of poetry that comprises a textual poem accompanied by an illustrative visual element. The connection between the text and illustration is usually underdetermined so that the reader's attention is drawn to the relationship between poem and illustration. There is a diverse population of poems of this kind from which to sample. Jordan's *Josian in Ermonie* (2009) presents a sort of psychogeographical tour of Southampton suburbia complete with photos, historical maps and other materials drawn from his research. Alan Moore's 'The Birth Caul' in *A Disease of Language* (Moore and Campbell, 2005, pp.5-56) is a long narrative poem whose one-off performance and subject matter is illustrated in the style of a graphic novel. Eshleman's 'Notes on a visit to Le Tuc D'Audoubert' (2003, pp.68-73) situates his sketches of rock formations and petroglyphs in cavities around his open form poem. 'Symbolic proteins etched on limestone', in *Reanimating Alan*, also explores this gap between textual poem and accompanying illustration.

In Oliver's *Diagram – poems* (Hawkins, 2006) textual poems are accompanied by diagrams in this same polysemic way. But what interests me about *Diagram – poems* in particular is the visual language of the diagrams. The diagrams are apparently based on maps of Marxist guerrilla raids in Uruguay. The mapping of warfare should be a narrative with ultimate authority thanks to the mapping being

carried out by the victors. But not only are the maps of the actions of a guerrilla movement that is in decline, Oliver also states that the 'theme [of the poems] is the untrustworthiness of what we take to be factual information.' The diagrams move against not only the factual/technical rationale of diagramming but against the stories of conflict that get told. Anything that could be described as a fact that makes it through to the diagrams is, says Oliver, most likely distorted. This seems to me to be the clearest example of poetry with visual elements that are self-consciously used for the same kind of détournement that I am describing in my own work. Oliver's diagrams are not 'found' elements that he has appropriated for his poem; they are not fragments of speech that have been re-contextualised. Rather, the diagrams have been drawn from scratch based on Oliver's distorted understanding of what took place and on his will to misuse of the visual language for representing warfare.

Another useful comparison can be made with Loydell's *Make Poetry History* (2006). This poem makes use of diagrams (geographical, molecular and biological?), photographs (microscopy?), schematics and a multi-variable graph. But Loydell uses a collage process, combining elements, including textual elements, so that they are all shown to have original material forms from contexts outside the poem. There is a sense of the 'dirty concrete' (Emerson, 2011), the impositions and deductions of the photocopier (or pixilation, digitization, changes of colour depth).

Dirty concrete is a term that has been used to describe a reaction to 'clean lines and graphically neutral' visual poetry, particularly when these features are read as 'lack of political engagement' (Emerson, 2011). There is still contention over the term 'dirty concrete' but I take it literally to refer to the dirt the materials and processes of combination, production and reproduction leave behind. 'Dirty' references the process of endless reproduction, where 'clean' references a mathematical or linguistic world of symbols, the purity of Platonic forms. Emerson describes it as the difference between the 'clean ordered life of a capitalist system and the dirty chaotic life of the lower classes' (2011). But there is the risk, in the dominance of dirty concrete, that an authenticity is elicited by the erosions and accretions of

reproduction that it values – a risk that credibility is sought by practitioners through using a style that is aligned with a fashionable critique. Additionally dirty concrete is only appropriate to the detourning of fragments of signal, semantic content. Loydell is detourning semantic content, fragments of speech and images, as opposed to the language from which the speech or image was constructed. Loydell must necessarily photocopy, scan or photograph the fragments he wishes to reproduce. My poems that detourn visual elements are, in contrast, clean because they detourn a technical visual language rather than fragments of technical speech in that language. They do so by misusing (or re-contextualising) the technical language to create *new* fragments of speech in the language. Because I am borrowing a language to create a new fragment of speech, I am using technologies that produce rather than reproduce, such as vector graphics software. It seems appropriate that in detourning these scientific languages I do not simply invert them into dirty. '[S]imple reversal... is always the least effective,' say Debord and Wolman, referring to the *Black Mass* (1956). The cleanliness of the scientific languages (sufficiency without surplus) that reflects a positivist outlook needs to make it through to the poems if there is a desire to subvert the ambitions of these languages.

There is a mandala-like diagram at the end of Schwerner's 'Tablet XII' in *The Tablets* (1999, p.44) that knowingly borrows the authority of the cosmological diagram from the narratives of metaphysics. It is a visual poem reminiscent of some of the diagrams of the Renaissance philosopher Fludd (Godwin, 1979, p.52). But if there is *détournement* in *The Tablets* it is on a much grander scale, rather than restricted to this single cosmological diagram. *The Tablets* appropriates formal aspects of the ancient text and the study of ancient texts: the inscrutable hieroglyph, the loss through damage of parts of the text, speculative translation, and layers of comment by archaeologist, translator or anthropologist. A real ancient text is not used. Instead a new ancient text is created that looks passable. It would be described as a hoax along the lines of *Ossian* were it not for the absence of concealment (after all, the book is published by the National Poetry Foundation). To my mind this too is an example of detourning a language as opposed to a fragment of speech. The language being detourned is the set of rules that define a genre. The rules

determine the types of text that can be produced, in this case, as a result of the study of ancient texts. Similar détournements occur in *The Art of Funerary Violin* (Kriwaczek, 2006), where the literary genre of cultural history is detoured, and in *Hav* (Morris, 2006) where the literary genre of travel writing is detoured. These détournements of genre can't be called hoaxes, unlike Sokal's famous essay for *Social Text* magazine (2012), or Ern Malley's modernist poems (2002). Hoaxes are genuine. They genuinely seek to hoax. These détournements don't expect to fool anyone (it can't be helped that a number of people visited travel agents in the seventies hoping to book a trip to Hav). They could simply be described as parodies if they didn't seem to have a serious interest in investigating the mechanics of the knowledge that is embedded in the languages with which they play – an interest perhaps too constructive to be described as parody or détournement. The whole of *Reanimating Alan* inclines in this direction through its structure of repeated plans, but the plans don't go far enough to be a détournement (or even a constructive parody) of a scientific paper or log book. Were this the aim each plan might have been broken down into hypothesis, methodology, method, data, results and so on. This would have upset a subtle balance. One of the things that might make a reader with a scientific background more tolerant of the irreverence for science in *Reanimating Alan* is the way this is balanced by an irreverence for literature. Literature is figured as the spiritual (reincarnation), superstition (Tarot), magic (conjuring tricks), animism (puppets), the occult (Kabbalah) and theory (Structuralism). The overall effect could be read as coming close to proposing that the study of literature is the study of an occult system.

Constructed languages

There are three poems in *Reanimating Alan* that experiment on the fringe of what aficionados call 'conlang': constructed languages. 'Turing with some degree of probability' (p.15) is the most marginal. Its language is statistical, based on an underlying document that sets its parameters. 'The Turing Spread' (p.150) to some extent detourns the structure of the Tarot (by borrowing the structures of deck and spread, rather than the expressions on particular cards), but also constructs a kind

of runic language on the cards themselves along the lines of the sigilization method conceived by Austin Osman Spare. 'The botanical language of Macoun' (pp.109-112) gets closer to being a true constructed language, though at the same time could be said to detourn the language of linguistic texts and their conventions for the presentation of linguistic rules.

To a computer scientist talk of languages for describing languages will immediately seem familiar without the need to mention the famous seventies Unix program 'Yet Another Compiler Compiler' (YACC). I believe any attempt to construct a language in the context of *Reanimating Alan* can't help but be a satire of the computer scientist's desire to construct systems and languages. The attempt to construct a language is, at the same time, undertaken with a certain seriousness in 'The botanical language of Macoun', as if it is a vice that will not be helped. But there is also a gentle humour, in my opinion, which is a consequence of the way the language is reverse engineered from the names of different types of apple. As well as the allusion to Alan Turing's suicide (he bit from an apple he had laced with cyanide in a reconstruction of a scene from the film *Sleeping Beauty*), the apple is always associated with that unnamed fruit in Genesis. This constructed language is pointing to the origins of its own problems, the origins of the culture wars, the origins of knowledge: the biting of the apple equates to the first Palaeolithic art on a cave wall, the moment a symbolic language dredged up human sentience (or vice versa).

Playing with constructed languages in this way expresses the question of whether consciousness emerges from language (as a social constructivist might have it) or whether consciousness is an entirely biological phenomenon (as a literary Darwinist might have it). If the parameters of consciousness are set by language, all that can feasibly be thought or felt lies already implicit in the language. Hence, with a new twist, the old trope of not creating but discovering a poem. But there is nothing Platonic or universal about the languages of natural speech so it is possible to speculate about the existence of unimaginable languages, much as it is possible to speculate about the existence of unimaginable life forms. The desire to construct

languages speaks of a desire to imagine these unimaginable languages. Implicit in this is the desire to imagine, as Nagel put it, what it's like to be a bat (1970). It is a desire to imagine the new and unimagined consciousness that would be a product of the constructed language. Perhaps the desire is futile because imagined languages can only ever be subsets of the language that imagines them, but it suggests, I believe, a desire to allow the existence of unimaginable consciousness.

Returning to *The Wake of the Imagination*, Kearney credits poststructuralist theory with a Copernican 'decentring' of the 'human imagination'. But he believes its 'programme of lucid disruption and disillusionment' cannot be, in the extreme, trapped in 'endless play'. While poststructuralism acknowledges no epistemological limits, it does, he says, acknowledge ethical limits. In the midst of the 'infinite regress', moments arrive in which an 'other' demands an immediate ethical response. If the demand is heard then the other cannot be or has not been reduced to the 'parodic play of empty imitations.' The 'ethical existence of the other as an *other*' can't help but 'reintroduce the dimension of depth' – it 'resists assimilation to the dehumanising processes of commodity fetishism' (1988, pp.360-362).

This ethical turn is subtly implied in Beer's resurrection of narrative at the end of 'Translation or Transformation?' The end of narrative, she says, is heralded by Lyotard when his concept of grand narratives nets all narratives with the grandest narrative of all. At this point there is a moment of what Jung describes as 'enantiodromia' (1981, p.334), an inversion that occurs at extremes. When everything is meaningful, nothing is. When narratives regress infinitely no narrative remains. Primordial chaos returns. But in that chaos narratives 'have a way of reforming' says Beer (1996, p.194). Small segments of narrative reappear like sticky clusters of amino acids.

This story is reflected in *Reanimating Alan*. In the face of the desire to investigate the long narrative poem – perhaps nothing less than an anachronistic desire to narrate everything, to make everything subservient to my narrative, to put everything at the service of one great system – I balk. The desire is the creative

equivalent of the 'professionalism' in critical analysis that believes analysis should 'penetrate the entire system of a work and riddle its completeness' (Beer, p.185). But I balk at the futility of such a task and the grand schemes it produces. *Reanimating Alan* inverts into a serial structure, a set of plans that could go on repeating themselves with infinite variation. But between these plans fragmentary narratives re-emerge, small glutinous balls of protein, linear assemblages, meaningful combinations, promising freaks, mutant proto-Adam-and-Eves that herald new lineages.

The desire to construct new languages begins where the détournement of linguistic structures leaves off. When détournement finishes disassembling the narratives of the 'ruling class' on the behalf of some 'other', a new language is required with which to build narratives from scratch. Constructed languages are more or less playful gestures in the direction of finding a language to narrate that other, the creature that issues Kearney's ethical demand. If this creature is truly other, it is not human and its narratives have a grammar that is not recognisable. The decentring of 'human imagination' lets a non human join the ranks of the sentient. The 'other' in *Reanimating Alan* is non-human sentience, whether animal, machine or hybrid. There is a question of ethics that always arises in discussions of artificial intelligence, and this question only expands when the more general case of non-human intelligence is considered. A question of ethics would seem to be highly suitable place for practice-based research to make a contribution.

According to Beer, no one discipline is 'the necessary prior or initiating condition of knowledge.' All disciplines 'learn stories from each other' (1996, p.194). But Beer also speculates about a relationship between disciplines more mysterious than this. There are, she says, analogies to be made between theories that seem to arise acausally in different disciplines (the example given is an analogy between chaos theory and deconstruction). The analogies are more than just word-play, Beer believes. As an example of this I suggest there is just such an inscrutable connection to be made with the Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness in Non-Human Animals at the Francis Crick Memorial Conference in July 2012 (Bekoff, 2012). The

declaration concludes a period of rapid advance for neuroscience. It coincides with a maturing ethical turn in the humanities that has begun to consider the response demanded by that 'other' discovered lurking outside the human in the humanities. Such an other appears, I believe, for example, amid the mirror tests of 'Machine intelligence' (pp.131-135) and the progressive reductions of 'Doctor Turning's cheese machine' (pp.115-122) in *Reanimating Alan*. In these two poems the antagonism isn't between social constructivism and positivism, or between science and humanities, but between the ethical demand of the other and the activities still carried out not just in the name of science but in the name of all disciplines that belong to the 'common pursuit' of knowledge for the exclusive furthering of humanity.

The science of mainstream and experimental

Perhaps the distinguishing feature of what is contentiously termed 'mainstream' poetry is authority. Padel has the authority to undertake her poetic biography, *Darwin: a life in poems* (2009): two commissions, a genealogical connection and friends of equal reputation to pass comment on her drafts. Authority is required by Padel to enable her to convey what she most wants to convey, 'his [Darwin's] voice' (2009, p.xviii). If voice (which is an index of authority) is the most important thing to mainstream poetry then in biographical poetry it must be the voice of the subject. Padel observes in her introduction that 'evidence was what [Darwin] cared about' (2009, p.xiv), so her task, she seems to believe, is likewise to efface herself through her academic objectivity. The poems are meticulously constructed around the evidence that Padel amasses: quotations from Darwin's writing. Quotations are always used appropriately; there is a 'slavish' (Debord and Wolman, 1956) deferral to the source. Marginal notes indicate context in a scholarly way. Padel must warn us, with an implied regret, that she had to 'tinker' with some of the quotations in order to make them poems.

It is enlightening to see that, faced both with the task of celebrating a famous scientist in the family and dealing with scientific subject matter, Padel attempts to adopt some of the formal apparatus of science. To attest to Darwin's care for evidence she bases the poems on evidence gathering, the accumulation of quotations from Darwin's own writing. The objectivity with which Padel presents the quotations points towards an academic concern to ensure the scholar does not distort the underlying truth.

There is something ironic about this, about a poet with a lyric voice thinking poetry about a scientist can or must be written with a kind of detachment that apes the objectivity associated with scientific method. Padel's own voice, where she allows it, becomes clipped and somewhat formal. But perhaps there is more to it. Padel sees her role as using poetic imagination to find beauty in the life and writing of a scientist. The extent to which the poems use extended quotes from Darwin that have been enjambed by Padel seems to suggest that there is something common to the scientific and poetic imagination by demonstrating that the quotes are already nearly poetry. These poems claim that the poetic is to be found in the scientific with only a little editorial tinkering. It isn't a new claim about the role of imagination in science (Whitworth, 2001, pp.111-119). McEwan is in similar territory in one of his essays on literary Darwinism when he highlights literary style in the groundbreaking paper by Watson and Crick on DNA (Amigoni, 2008, p.158). The reverse process, of poetic imagination being found in science, should be exemplified by Einstein's daydream of a beam of light returning to its point of origin. The problem for a scientist with Einstein's daydream is that it doesn't account for all the daydreams that were 'wrong' and hence forgotten.

In introducing the poetry anthology *A Quark for Mister Mark*, the editors recognise the problem that 'the traffic... is... almost always one way' (Riordan and Turney, 2000, p.xiii) between science and poetry. There is, they say, no deep relation between the creativities required by different disciplines. Contemporary poetry is often 'suffused' with science, say Riordan and Turney, but these references are usually descriptive, rarely pass comment and never actually contribute to science.

But the lack of poems that comment on or subvert science (despite their inclusion of Paterson's 'Scale of Intensity') could also be a consequence of the anthology's agenda: it is happy not to have one. The editors say that the motives for their 'little book' are 'simply pleasure' (2000, p.xi, p.xiii). This would also partly explain the selection of mainstream poets for the anthology. Either the editors find no experimental poets that give them simple pleasure or experimental poets are steering clear of science. The correction in the anthology's title ('Mister' for 'Muster') suggests the former. One candidate could have been Oliver's 'The Furnaces' (Crozier and Longville, 1990, p.198), in which the visions of networks of gas pipes are more exotic than Redgrove's visions of water treatment works. Another that comes easily to hand is Monk's 'Angles' (Sinclair, 1996, pp.273-275) replete with its atoms, spirals, astrocytes, zeniths and voltages. So while the editors of *A Quark for Mister Mark* are free to indulge uncritical preferences (though they neglect to mention the authority their simple pleasures have), it seems the sciences are no less present in the work of experimental poets.

Bök describes his collection of poems, *Crystallography*, as 'a pataphysical encyclopaedia that misreads the language of poetics through the conceits of geology' in order to concern itself with 'the reflexive operation of its own process' (2003, p.156). Pataphysics combines two interests of Bök's, the geeky mathematical constraints of Oulipo (Oulipo itself grew out of a subcommittee of pataphysicians) and aleatory poetry, the poetics of chance. The crystal is a perfect vehicle for the two interests with its precise geometric forms always minutely marred by the tiny random flaws known in Pataphysics as clinamina. These flaws in exquisitely demanding forms are often incorporated on purpose by Oulipo writers, almost like the coded signature of the poet in the final lines of a traditional ghazal. But Bök is more interested in letting chance aberrations take place in his forms because he sees chance as generative; he values 'unexpected coincidence'. He has a 'vain hope' that 'literature might speak for itself', that a discourse might have an 'aesthetic potential' that is beyond any 'authorial intention'. Language has already 'anticipated and inventoried' anything that an author might produce because all texts can be generated automatically from the procedures that instantiate a language's 'formal

system'. So why not let aberrations and mutations occur in those procedures instead (Bök, 2006, p.25)?

In *Crystallography* science is used as a donor rather than (or sometimes as well as) allusion, texture or metaphor. The forms, structures and procedures that are instruments fashioned by the necessities of scientific method are donated. Bök uses them for his imaginary science of poetry. There are two-dimensional letter lattices (2003, p.34), lookup tables (2003, p.115) and coordinate systems (2003, p.123). But in what way are these to be termed 'conceits'? Bök's use of the term conceit displays a refined understanding of science, I believe. He is aware that these are instruments with which scientists model phenomena that are ultimately elusive. As such the instruments are figurations, attempts to produce structures onto which phenomena can provisionally be mapped. The perceived strength of the mapping is, according to Rorty, a matter of the prevailing consensus (Whitworth, 2001, p.23). At one extreme – that Rorty would describe as hard fact – the instruments begin to merge with the phenomena and become indistinct. It is as if the instrument is transparent, a clear window. At the other extreme, where consensus is more problematic, the distance between phenomena and instrument is more readily visible, the figurative nature of an instrument's representations is more readily understood. I don't believe Bök would hold with Rorty's view that consensus is the deciding factor. Instead he would see the distance between the phenomena and the instrument from a scientific point of view, as a consequence of innate properties of the instrument. But the idea of an instrument providing a figurative view holds just the same.

There is an interesting consistency between Padel and Bök when they get to grips with science, which results in a sidelining of what Kearney calls the 'transcendental imagination'. The transcendental imagination is an Enlightenment 'lamp' that projects an 'original light' (1981, p.253). For Padel the lamp is sidelined by her formal approach, her attempt to tell the truth about Darwin and his ideas in a way that ironically serves to mute her lyrical voice. For Bök there is already a fascination with what lies outside authorial intent but within the possibilities of a complex

system that can allow random mutations. Bök, like other Oulipian writers, experiments with generative devices – often highly mathematical – in order to let language speak through the device in ways which are unanticipated and produce accidental beauty. Experimental poets like Hejinian, influenced by poststructuralist thinking, reach the same point by challenging the humanist subject through parataxis, syntactical disruptions and language that is constantly unpicking itself. It is intriguing that such irreconcilable views have produced a confluence in practice. It helps me to understand how I solved one of the principle problems in *Reanimating Alan*.

The way in which scientific and technological concepts would be handled by my creative work was a primary question in this research project. In comparison the issue of the relationship between contemporary mainstream and experimental poetry was in the background. It was a contextual issue, something to be considered in any creative writing research in the genre of poetry. The terms 'mainstream' and 'experimental' are hotly debated. I don't want to add another set of definitions so I will only say that in general I take mainstream to be relatively accessible and experimental to be relatively inaccessible. Relative accessibility is often a consequence of an interest in the lyric, democratisation, anti-elitism (or anti-intellectualism, if you prefer) and a common-sense belief in the transparency of language. Relative inaccessibility is often a consequence of a reaction against the lyric, an interest in social constructivist theories, and an interest in language as material. The 'poetry wars' between mainstream and experimental are so named because, in some respects, they are a microcosm of the culture wars between science and the humanities. Given my research interest in how the relationship between science and the humanities impacts on my creative work, it seems likely there should be some intersection with how mainstream and experimental practices impact on my creative work too.

At the outset I felt exposed to two immediate risks relating to science. The first was of being too celebratory, too mesmerised by technological successes, and hence too descriptive. The second was the opposite, of being too condemnatory, too

reactionary and hence too unapproachable. The first threatened unreflective and uncritical accessibility, the second threatened angry inaccessibility. The solution, quite simply, was to find a structure that allowed variation. The question became one of how to design a differentiated structure that would allow passing moments of relief and humour, changes in tone and subject matter, a variety of densities, and reversal of opinion – a question usually of less significance in the pointed forty-line poem. Finding a suitable structure for *Reanimating Alan* not only gave me a way to handle scientific subject matter, but brought with it a way to balance mainstream and experimental elements.

Due to the length of *Reanimating Alan* I felt it could demand too much of a reader to combine relatively inaccessible complexities of science and technology with relatively inaccessible complexities of experimental writing. This is despite the complexities of the science and technology being conceptual and the complexities of the experimental writing being more about reader reception. The result is the separation of plans and poems. The separation reminds me of the splits between poem-artefact and prose-commentary in *The Tablets* (Schwerner, 1999) and between poem-vision and prose-analysis (roughly speaking) in *Juniper Fuse* (Eshleman, 2003). It doesn't mean there is no science in the poems or no poetry in the plans. But the plans are by default a pseudoscientific domain and the poems an experimental linguistic domain.

Both poems and plans sometimes break out of this pattern and become momentarily lyrical. This cuts against the grain of expectation, against the pseudoscientific tone in the plans and against the alienating artifice of the poems. The lyrical moments are, I believe, intensified and made strange by this friction. The more infrequent, rapid and unexpected the shifts back and forth the more the effect is heightened. These lyrical moments are, I surprise myself in saying, the goal of the whole project – the brief appearance of a unitary sentience, a successful reanimation. They are also the moments that rescue some quirky compassion for Turing from the parade of satirical grotesqueries. An example occurs in 'Plan 31 – quantum physics' (p.123) where the plan moves from the urbane, 'Unfortunately it

must be acknowledged,' to calling out to Turing as he 'bubbles briefly from the quantum effervescence of empty space.' Similarly in 'Plan 25 – through a complex arrangement of mirrors' (p.98) communication seems momentarily possible through the mirror, but the moment is lost.

Narrative and biography

The 2012 centenary celebrations of Turing's birth interest me because I'm cautious of celebration. I can't help but wonder what medicine I'm being made to take with the syrup. In this section of the thesis I first want to reflect on what these celebrations are about and how my caution or concerns manifest themselves in *Reanimating Alan*. I then want to consider some of the issues that recur in the genre of biography and see how they may have impacted on *Reanimating Alan*.

Celebration and hindrance

My suspicion is that celebration of the Turing centenary is somehow a little self-congratulatory and I want to try to articulate how. The celebrations seem to say as much about the society in which the celebrations are taking place as about the subject of the celebrations. We – the celebrants – see ourselves as belonging to a society that is proud of its tolerance and its ability to admit past mistakes. The treatment of Turing is one of those mistakes. Turing was convicted of gross indecency for which he could receive either a six month prison sentence (maximum) or an experimental chemical castration for a period of a year through monthly injections of female hormones. He chose the latter. The conviction came about effectively on evidence Turing gave himself in his statement, perhaps through naivety, perhaps from a refusal to be ashamed of his homosexuality (Hodges, 1992, pp.456-476).

A conviction for any offence is a banal example of the intervention of the nation state in the private life of the citizen. But Turing's crime captivates us because the law has changed over the last fifty years from seeing homosexuality as being of public (moral) consequence to seeing it as part of a citizen's private life. Re-watching these historical intrusions of the nation state into what is now considered private life we are nonplussed and almost amused at how recently we were still old-fashioned. Celebration is fuelled by the ostentatious admission of these past

intrusions. The confession of these mistakes leaves the celebration free to dwell on the emancipation that has taken place since – emancipation that would have allowed Turing to live the private life he pleased.

Turing is the ideal vehicle for this celebration because of the emancipatory power with which we, as celebrants, credit computer technology and because of the work Turing did in the Second World War. Turing's role in the development of computation combines with his role as a patriot supporting the war effort and achieving a victory from which contemporary society still traces its roots. We see a tragic irony in the way Turing was treated: the emergence of the computer technology to which he made such a large contribution has helped to bring us greater freedoms from which he may have benefitted. Such freedoms and benefits derived from computer technology include, for example, open access to information, the facilitation of minority communities, a freedom to publish that is difficult to restrict along the lines of national boundaries, and the purported role of social media in the Arab Spring. An association has been forged between computer technology and the internet on one hand, and free speech and consumer rights in a tolerant democracy on the other. It is as if Turing's own technology would eventually have freed him. We, as celebrants, must believe that the nation state no longer interferes in the private sexual lives of its citizens.

I believe this explains why the mythos of Turing suits a celebration that is an act of thanksgiving for a beneficent nation state that accepts or forgives our diverse private lives. We apologise to Turing for the way he was treated because we now recognise that it was his work that saved us from fascism (the Enigma machine for breaking German codes) and still keeps us free (through vague reasoning about the internet). It is almost a New Testament narrative. We are a civilisation, says Foucault, that tells itself that 'through abuse of power which has not ended, it has long "sinned" against sex.' (1978, p.9) Except that between 1976, when Foucault wrote this, and the celebrations of 2012, the 'which has not ended' has been dropped.

Halsey makes a fascinating poetic attempt to get to grips with the myths of the death of Shelley in *The Text of Shelley's Death* (2001). He collects as many varying (but contemporaneous) accounts as he can muster and in stacking these accounts together allows their contradictions to shine out. Against the reader's expectation it is these contradictions, these points of rupture in a consistent telling of the story, that produce something like a gleam of metal where paint is scratched. The shifting perspective of multiple accounts of a single event is now a familiar trope, as when many fragments of mobile phone video footage are assembled by the news media to reconstruct an event. There are cultural biases in the way mobile video is mediated, just as there are with textual accounts. But there are added instabilities that occur in textual accounts as can be seen in the accounts of Shelley's death. These instabilities don't only occur as one account intersects with another, they occur within individual accounts in their deletions and alterations, in the struggle to create fact from language. These instabilities don't simply equate to events in the video footage that are concealed by a physical obstruction. The linguistic camera is pointing at memory rather than sources of reflected light, and memory bends and distorts from the pressure. The cumulative effect of Halsey's work is to beg a question about the relation of a myth to an event or person. Is the myth a phantasm, only to be surmised by sketching out the network of variations in its telling? Or is the myth the attempt to get at an unmediated event – a truth – that lies beneath the variations in accounts of the event, a kind of Platonic (but physical) preverbal version of the event?

I don't wish to imply that serious biographies like Hodges' definitive *Alan Turing: the enigma* (1992) are the cause of a Turing myth. The celebrations necessarily consume something far simpler, far less nuanced than a thorough-going and aching human biography. The myth must have a fast and infectious meme-like quality. As a way of getting to grips with the myth I attempted an experiment. I collected the text from seventy online articles about Turing published by seven well known British national newspapers and media organisations over the last year. I used a simple algorithm to count how many times each word appeared. I then sorted the results so that the most frequently occurring words were at the top of

the list and the least frequent were at the bottom. The articles were approximately 50k words in total, equating to about 6k unique words. I discarded the first twenty-six words in the list, which were all words of four letters or less, 'the', 'a', 'his' and so on, along with the names 'alan' and 'turing'. Here are the next 112 words, in order, which I believe give a kind of quantitative index of the Turing myth:

turing's not who i from which computer him been bletchley work war
one we has said park after were would are life enigma about death
when world so man time what all years people you more there machine
code suicide computing also year or genius first could how very science
their manchester being new than two into they intelligence will now if
only father exhibition centenary some story just codebreaker my can
gay found up our university way did where most cyanide then apple
german other many even do over himself no test british while used
think its because public before worked machines known during such
google pardon us committed mathematician museum

This distillate of the Turing myth reveals the components that comprise it, some more obvious than others. There's the importance of work and changes in working life, appearing twice in 'work war one' and 'public before worked machines'. There's the benefit of the myth to science research in an increasingly competitive academia, 'found up our university'. There's a kind of death-wish, 'do over himself'. And there's the Turing test co-opted by patriots for the 'british test'. There are also some moments where the myth accidentally speaks against itself, such as 'just' a 'codebreaker' but 'gay', the nihilistic threat of 'suicide computing', the 'exhibition' of fatherhood ('how very science'), and commodification through 'google' (a new god we ask to 'pardon us') with its dehumanising 'mathematician museum'. The beginning even reflects the imperiousness of myth-making: 'turing's not who i'. The myth is communal, out of the hands of the individual.

What is missing from the distillate is the sense of the political world's intrusion into the physical body and private life for which Turing's life provides such a spectacular

and concrete example. The attempt to alter his sexuality through the forced injection of hormones to reduce his libido exhibited a brutal literalism and lack of evidence base comparable to primitive use of homeopathic magic in which, for example, qualities such as speed are appropriated by consuming fast running animals. A focus on the arresting literalism of Turing's treatment could have served to re-sensitise celebrants to the horrors of an ideological intrusion into the flesh: subtler intrusions were also taking place, like the talking cures for homosexuality that were still popular at the time, no less brutal or ideological for their subtlety.

While producing creative work I was aware of a danger of being uncritically drawn into participation in celebration. My resistance to celebration is a resistance to the idea that the political world no longer intrudes into the physical body, that the nation state no longer manipulates the aspects of our lives that we call private. I kept the resistance alive through making a connection between Turing and the Italian film director and writer Pasolini. I made a particular connection with Pasolini's film *Salò* (2008), which graphically shows institutional powers (judge, aristocrat, political leader and church leader) sexually abusing their subjects. Although the film is set in the death throes of Italian fascism in *Salò* on Lake Garda in 1944, Pasolini explicitly states that he means his film to depict, metaphorically, the abuses of consumerism at the time the film was made in 1974 and 1975 (thayaht, 2011). But Pasolini's own theory of film suggests he saw the film more literally and less metaphorically; he sees film as a spoken phrase (*parole*) from the *langue* of reality (2005, pp.223-232). The film *Salò*, with Pasolini's commentary, seemed not just to reflect the abuse to which Turing was subject, but to recognise that the abuse is continuing.

Pasolini made three films known as the *Trilogy of Life*, which he disowned before making *Salò*. Reflecting on making these three films, he felt he had been caught up in a process of celebration and emancipation. He describes the films as 'part of the fight for the democratization of the "right to self-expression," and then for sexual liberation' that was a fundamental moment in the progressive movement in the late 60s. But he felt any triumphs of progressivism were 'brutally surpassed' by the

way consumerism would 'concede a vast (but false) tolerance'. Consumerism was causing 'innocent bodies' to be 'violated, manipulated, tampered with', so that 'private sexual lives... have undergone the trauma of both false tolerance and physical degradation' (Pasolini, 2005, pp.xvii-xviii). Pasolini almost anticipates Foucault's question as to whether 'there is really a historical rupture between the age of repression and the critical analysis of repression.' The rupture could be 'part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces', part of a 'more devious and discreet form of power' (Foucault, 1978, pp.10-11). I found it reassuring that Pasolini described a continuing violation of private sexual lives in such unequivocal terms. It would otherwise have been easy to talk myself out of resisting celebration, seeing resistance as nonconformist hyperbole or casual cynicism.

One of my first pieces of creative work during this research was based on Pasolini's poem 'The Ashes of Gramsci' (1996, pp.2-23) in which the narrator – who can hardly be anyone other than Pasolini himself – stands in front of the memorial to the Marxist Antonio Gramsci in Cimitero degli Stranieri in Rome and addresses Gramsci directly. The Italian novelist Moravia described Pasolini as a civil poet in the tradition of Italian civil poetry, though Pasolini seems not to have cared for the term, perhaps because the tradition is more often associated with poets on the right wing (*Whoever says the truth shall die*, 2006; Zigaina, n.d.). 'The Ashes of Gramsci' fits with the general conception of the civil poem. It is concerned with aspects of public life – whether religious, ethical or political – but is also 'fused with an entirely personal sensibility' that incorporates reflection on the 'artist's significance' in public affairs (MacAfee, 1996, pp.7-8). The 'social agitations' of the civil poet make him or her a *scrittore scomodo* – a writer who makes uncomfortable reading (Lawton, 2005, p.xxvii). The discomfort comes from viewing things from the margins or the wrong way round (perhaps related to the disturbing effect of the reversed binoculars in *Salò*). The wilfully oblique view is exemplified by Pasolini's 'ugly verses', which sided with the peasant policemen (though not with the institutions of law and order) in their confrontations with literate middle class students on Valle Giulia in Rome in 1968 (2005, pp.150-157).

I had hoped that writing about Turing, in some respects in the style of Pasolini, as if I were stood in front of the bronze statue of a seated Turing in Sackville Gardens in Manchester, would crystallise an ambition to write a contemporary equivalent of civil poetry. This would provide the apparatus with which to examine my resistance to celebration. Unfortunately it proved not so easy. What remains of this writing appears in *Reanimating Alan* in 'Sackville Gardens' (pp.164-166). The achievement of 'Sackville Gardens' – a sort of fidgety reluctance to settle – is the result of a long process of compression. This process has left it at odds with 'The Ashes of Gramsci'. It doesn't have time to look around; it doesn't have time to follow the meandering trains of thought that make 'The Ashes of Gramsci' seem like an ex tempore monologue. Something has been sacrificed in favour of craft – an eccentric charisma to the narration that Pasolini inexplicably gets away with. In looking for a successful contemporary equivalent to leftist civil poetry being written in the UK, I've found Bonney's *The Commons* (2008) to come closest. Bonney manages to make his militant position wonderfully slippery with mellifluous disjunctions, while peppering the poem with some of the self-deprecating humour of Berrigan's *The Sonnets* (2000).

My attempt to leverage some of Bonney's techniques appears in 'Machine intelligence' (pp.131-135). Although this poem doesn't directly address the celebration of the Turing centenary it does address the much vaunted technological race to create artificial intelligence of recent decades, which naturally falls into the domain of the civil poem. Theoretical discussions of artificial intelligence quickly become a question of how sentience is tested and what constitutes personhood. This immediately raises the issue of organic non-human sentience as well as machinic (non-human) intelligence. The issues are neatly captured in *Can Animals and Machines be Persons* (Leiber, 1985), an extended thought experiment in the form of a transcript from a future United Nations commission. The commission is hearing the case of both a chimpanzee and an artificial intelligence, neither of whom can be economically brought back from an orbiting space station that is due to be shut down. Comparable issues of sentience appear in 'Machine intelligence' but muddled by a deliberate confusion between the organic and machinic. The

poem appears out of kilter with other comparable parts of *Reanimating Alan*. Where other longer poems experiment in a playful and often tangential way, for instance, with alchemy in 'Whitening the cider fox' (pp.86-90) or with names of cheeses in 'Doctor Turning's cheese machine' (pp.115-122), the experimentation in 'Machine intelligence' is of a different order. For all their experiment the other longer poems are working with elements of narrative and this narrative gives the poems a face. Although the sentences in 'Machine intelligence' are smoothly stitched together, reasonably well punctuated and give the semblance of hypotactical development, there is a machine-like quality that is working in opposition. This quality is present in the (faulty) repetition of lines, which fights with linear development, and in the continual slippage of subject pronouns, like the slipping of gears, from I to you to they to we to it. Whether successful or not, this slippage is a key feature of the poem, reflecting a Protean nature in the sentence with which the poem is concerned as it flows in and out of a variety of creatures, communities, corporations and machinery. By keeping in motion, the subject pronouns move around a horror that is never faced directly. That horror is the treatment of animals (in medical research), the treatment of Turing (as another animal) and the potential treatment of a sentient machine. The changing subject pronouns act out a levelling of ethical standards across corporate body, human, machine and animal. But both the small, parlour elegances of rational, completed sentences and the sense of slipping gears continually draw the gaze away.

This is a technique I modelled on *Salò*. The slow stately elegance of the film's mise en scène is at odds with the action. The disconnection is unnerving. The lack of a viewpoint from which the film could be controlled or narrated has a flattening effect on the film. The continual slippage of subject pronouns renders a comparable flattening effect in the poem, I believe. It is also enlightening to see how Prynne makes use of a dissociation between aesthetic elegance and untranslatable horror in his reading of 'Refuse Collection' in Paris (2009). He begins the reading by setting up the elegance outside the poem (including playing some seventeenth century music for harpsichord on tiny speakers) in order to prepare a white ground on which he will draw the dark ideograms of 'Refuse Collection', ideograms that have

no entrance and exit points, no means by which the listener can look directly upon them, no face. The onslaught is almost robotic, a consequence of the struggle to fit the words to familiar patterns of intonation. It is only immediately comprehensible in fragments. This effect and the lack of a consistent, redeeming viewpoint (the sense of control offered by narrative) are used to frame the horrific torture and abuse that took place in Abu Ghraib prison. The horror is not exactly described – it is literally framed. The frame is the poem. The eye or the ear can follow it round on the outside of the horror. It both diverts the gaze from the blinding black sun held in the frame and draws attention to the existence of a thing in the frame that cannot be looked upon.

One might argue that a civil poetry should be read more widely than Bonney or Prynne. Harrison's poetry is at this end of the spectrum. In a critical essay on Harrison, Thomson says that Harrison has 'evolved' a way to combine 'the polarities of public and private': it requires a 'difficult plainness' in which 'high art is used against itself'. Harrison's private world is a 'troubled' but 'humane' centre in 'an inhumane public world' (1997, pp.117-119). It is interesting that in 'The Shadow of Hiroshima' (1995, pp.1-17) and elsewhere Harrison experiments with a hybrid film/poem. Perhaps this is also one of his attempts at finding a solution to civil address, combining the public theatre of cinema and the intimacy of poetry. The film images, noted in the left hand margins of his film/poems, have a public resonance, telescoping between interviewees and, for example, nuclear detonations and baseball stadiums. Meanwhile, the poetry can linger on the individual and particular. Pasolini discusses the idea of an 'autonomous' film script that never becomes a film in his essay 'The screenplay as a "structure that wants to be another structure" ' (2005, pp.187-196). Such a script, he says, is not merely another literary genre because it requires the reader's collaboration in visualising a 'potential' film, which is constantly being alluded to. But Harrison's film/poems have been performed against the visual images he names in their left hand margins. As a result his film/poems now no longer allude to a 'potential' structure but to actual performances. The potential combination of public and private through a virtual film is forestalled by the actual performance, leaving the public and private

perspectives in Harrison's film/poems a little separated. In using *Reanimating Alan* to structure my creative work I have found a structure that in some respects represents the process of my research, my plans to find a narrative. I see planning as equivalent to Pasolini's autonomous film script, and narrative as equivalent to a 'potential' film that doesn't exist. The narrative remains virtual, giving *Reanimating Alan* autonomy, and allowing a reader to collaborate in creating narratives (which are nothing less than reanimations). The plans refuse to let a single narrative predominate and thereby refuse to participate in a public Turing myth. But the repeated planning for narrative (reanimation) also refuses to allow my creative work to become monologic, the revelation of a private world.

The title of Thurston's essay, 'If Poetry is Private Language Aspiring to be Public, How Should One Write?' (Lopez and Caleshu, 2007, pp.263-269), hints at something similar to the idea of a structure that wants to be another structure. Thurston begins by describing 'language-centred writing' as a practice that can feel like using a quasi-private language. Meanwhile 'other strategies' in contemporary British poetry communicate with larger audiences by being 'emotionally candid' and 'forthright'. Thurston complicates this binary by asserting an increased scope in 'language-centred practices' for evoking layers of otherwise inaccessible experience, while at the same time there can be 'nothing so hermetic as the "personal" poem' that often results from the expressiveness of the 'forthright' strategies (2007, p.263). The solution for Thurston begins by 'disavowing any straightforward alliance' with particular strategies so as to be free to 'draw energy' from the 'tension' between strategies, between the 'private language of innovative writing' and the 'more public modes' of the mainstream (2007, p.268). I am aware that I have made use of this tension in *Reanimating Alan*, resulting in 'straightforward' poems that become 'hermetic' or evasive, such as 'The garden path' (p.143), and 'innovative' poems that mark some of the points of easiest access in *Reanimating Alan*, such as 'A bestiary of biography' (p.83). But there could be no more literal interpretation of a private language that wants to be public than 'The botanical language of Macoun' (pp.109-112). Rather than finding a public language (for instance, an 'emotionally candid' one) the aspiration is to make a private

language public – a uniquely poetic contribution to public discourse. Because the aspiration cannot be fulfilled (the film is never made), the reader can collaborate in visualising the potential public language that is clearly the aspiration of the private world they enter.

In *Reanimating Alan*, in 'Plan 34 – by decryption' (p.138), the world is described as being flooded by zombie Turings. Presumably these zombie Turings include the seventy Turings reproduced in the online articles I retrieved earlier in this section. As a result of this flood it is possible that a Turing uncontaminated by the celebration's myths can no longer be located. The only thing left is to create him anew through reanimation. Reanimation is indicative of a refusal to speak the accepted public language of Turing, but rather to create new Turings in new languages in the privacy of the lab, then turn them out into the world.

Issues of biography in *Reanimating Alan*

Although examining celebration has been necessary and useful, it by no means exhausts the subject of Turing's biography, let alone the subject of biography in *Reanimating Alan* or more widely in my previous creative work. Significant issues include the question of what constitutes biography, the relationship between biographer and subject, the approach taken by the biographer, the problem of the internal world of the biographer's subject, and the ethical dimension of biography. I intend to make a quick tour of these issues in the context of some recent research on biography, taking the opportunity to attempt some statements that identify what has taken place in *Reanimating Alan*, without making a claim as to its success or failure.

"Biography sets out to tell you that a life can be described, summed up, packaged and sold," ' says Hibbard in 'Biographer and Subject: A Tale of Two Narratives' (2006, p.19), quoting Hermione Lee. The biographer becomes the cunning editor of the posthumous montage that Pasolini describes in 'Observations on the sequence shot' (2005, pp.233-237), commodifying the subject. Nevertheless, Hibbard says that in biography 'it is generally assumed that there is a certain truth or essence to be ascertained.' To this end the 'presence of the biographer... is a tricky matter.' Hibbard's solution is to see biographical writing as a 'tale of two narratives', of both biographer and subject in a 'dialectical' relationship (2006, pp.19-20).

In Beard's biography *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (2000) the relationship between biographer and subject is based on homogeneity. One Cambridge classicist writes about the life of another Cambridge classicist. This enables Beard to open up the finicky protocols of this rarefied community to a general readership. Beard has an ambivalence that comes from working too close to the machinery that created the myths of Harrison. She weighs the content of the myths, inevitably dispelling some, while appreciating the artifice and bravado with which they were brought about. In contrast Gahagan's *Tours around the soul of Ludwig* (2009) is a

relationship between biographer and subject that is based on the necessity of translation. In this dual language publication, Gahagan's long poem in English about Ludwig II of Bavaria is translated into German. Gahagan is outside German language and culture, and outside the world of the great European royal courts. Her poem instead tours the soul of Ludwig by projecting it onto the rooms of his palace, using the palace to translate Ludwig's *weltschmerz* and romantic nostalgia. My relationship with Turing should sit somewhere between these two extremes. Am I someone who traces a lineage from my undergraduate computer science days back to Turing? Or am I someone who looks over the fence at the discipline of science from a world of poetry? I'm not comfortable with either view, and I wonder how *Reanimating Alan* appears to readers in this respect. I also surmise that I have worked against what Hibbard calls the 'dialectical' nature of the relationship between biographer and subject, part of my enterprise having been to emphasise Turing's remoteness, as I will describe.

In reference to Nadel's categorisation of three approaches to biography – 'the dramatic/expressive, the objective/academic, and the interpretive/analytic' – Hibbard describes the latter two as having dominated the Anglo-American tradition in the twentieth century. These are the two approaches in which the biographer "'strives to eliminate himself" '. 'Authorial intrusion... is generally unwelcome' because the 'best biography focuses... on the subject.' But no matter how hard the biographer strives, his or her presence is unavoidable, not least in 'the choice of subject' (Hibbard, 2006, pp.20-21). For Hibbard this choice inevitably evokes the 'stories behind the stories' that are the narrative of the biographical enterprise. And despite the reader's supposed view that biography is 'firm ground' in the fluidity of the 'post-poststructuralist era' the explicit presence of the biographer is becoming increasingly popular, Hibbard believes: it is a presence 'in the story and its telling' that will 'reconfigure the genre' (2006, p.23).

This perspective provides some strange contrasts with *Reanimating Alan*. The persona of the biographer, where it enters the story, is expected by Hibbard to be authentic, in the same way that the practitioner who narrates critical commentary

is expected to be some viable and evidential presentation of the practitioner. In *Reanimating Alan* the would-be biographer is the narrator of the plans. On the one hand *Reanimating Alan* could be a fiction that happens to refer to the life of Turing, and on the other the planner could simply be me, a practice-based researcher as opposed to a biographer, assembling practice artefacts relating to Turing much as a biographer assembles archive material. The tension can't be resolved. It is not enough to say that everything in *Reanimating Alan* is a fiction. Elements of verifiable biographical information about Turing mix with elements of (theoretically) verifiable material about the planner. Exactly what is verifiable is hard to deduce but at times information is clearly disseminated in a way that appears to want to suggest verifiability, such as in the footnote about Plessey (p.23). Were it entirely a fiction, surprisingly, a reader might expect it to be more rather than less coherent, and to get a greater sense of the unitary selves of these fictive people. In addition, *Reanimating Alan* doesn't narrate the 'stories behind the stories' (Hibbard, 2006, p.23), which are the stories of biographical investigation or authorial enterprise, but encapsulates them in its form, in the seemingly pre-narrative and draft nature of a series of plans.

Not only is no attempt made to bring coherence to the subject in *Reanimating Alan*, the subject is thoroughly usurped – deposed by an irreverent researcher who sees no need for the subject when the subject can be reanimated multiple times. The subject is not deposed, as Hibbard suggests can happen, through 'narrative stance' (2006, p.26), but through being made obsolete. Reanimation enables infinite repetition of the act of usurpation as each reanimation is dropped by the researcher and replaced by another. The exercise of this monstrous power of the researcher can't help but assert (through absence) what it denies – the original subject. Perhaps in allowing 'permeable boundaries' between biography and fiction it goes too far and, as Hibbard says, quoting Woolf, 'loses both worlds' (2006, p.28). But *Reanimating Alan* cannot be placed on a one-dimensional continuum between biography and fiction. There is a dimension of poetry that intensifies the cross-contamination of formal and narrative properties. Technique distorts the

biographical narrative just as the biographical narrative distorts technique, as I will describe.

Howe provides an example in her complex poem 'Articulation of Sound Forms in Time' (1990, pp.1-38). The poem is based on historical research carried out by Howe that has located a fragment of biography of a man called Reverend Hope Atherton. The documents Howe has recovered describe a skirmish between Native Americans and a small force of English soldiers. Despite being surrounded, most of the English soldiers managed to fight their way back to safety. But they left behind Hope Atherton and seven or eight soldiers from whom they had become separated. Hope Atherton and the remaining soldiers surrendered after hiding in woods for several days. The soldiers were killed but Hope Atherton was spared by the Native Americans for reasons that are unclear (perhaps from their fear of his religious garb). He seemingly wandered for a time, lost in the wilderness. On regaining civilisation no one believed his story and he died shortly after.

The first part of the poem lays out this context discursively, and includes an extract from one of Howe's source documents. It is the second part of the poem that is of particular interest for its representation of the way that, according to Nicholls, in an essay on Howe, Hope Atherton 'falls out of the safe discursive space of a "prophetic and corporate" identity'. His wanderings are 'not directly narratable' (1996, pp.594-595). Howe's techniques are a consequence of this unnarratable narrative, or it could be said that the wanderings remain unnarratable and unnarrated through Howe's techniques. As Nicholls says, she 'forces prosody *against* syntax' to defy 'syntactical logic' and block 'emergent narrative' (1996, p.596). Hope Atherton, rejected by the Native Americans, his story rejected after his return, lacks a discourse within which the story of his wanderings can be constructed. Howe sees her poetry, one of 'fracturing discourse' that fails to 'speak fluently', as the only means of recovering a forgotten historical figure who has fallen into a crack at the border between two enemies (1996, p.597). But 'recovering' is the wrong word: Howe doesn't recover Hope Atherton but goes to meet him in the wilderness – she discovers a natural companion to her poetry. The biographical poem finds that its

formal characteristics serendipitously provide a vehicle for issues at stake in its subject because there was only one subject such a poem could select. A confluence of technique and subject may be required in biographical poetry, which would mean that successful biographical poems could be difficult to repeat.

The question of how the subject is constituted, whether in biography or real life, cannot be answered, says Hibbard, by positing an 'ur-character' that can 'be recovered and revealed'. Hibbard's answer is to say that the biographer and subject 'constitute each other'. Consequently he sees the 'limit-cases... on the margins of the genre' as 'an intriguing site for examining and thinking through issues relating to representation and narrative' (2006, p.32). This helps to describe what has happened to the subject matter of *Reanimating Alan* – rather than being about Turing, it is about narrative (and associated concepts such as the nature of subjectivity) while being both constrained by Turing and achieved, as it were, through Turing and his seminal interest in artificial intelligence. Turing is not the centre of the circle described by *Reanimating Alan*. Turing's biography is around the circumference from where it sets bounds and seeps towards the centre, as opposed to being dead centre beaming out. Meanwhile, as Turing's biographical information becomes a constraint, the man himself is nowhere to be found. Perhaps it could be said that something similar to what took place in Howe's poem is occurring: technique has become a vehicle for questions, such as the nature of intelligence, that were of interest to Turing.

According to Falk in 'Aspects of Political Psychobiography', early twentieth century biographies can be divided into those that are 'specialized and technical', which he terms "'scientific" ', and those that are of "'literary" interest', which are dominated by an emotional response to the subject (1985, p.607). The emerging psychoanalytic biography contained elements of both. Desirous of becoming a creditable science, psychoanalysis valued detached observations, clinical facts. At the same time it conceded the presence of the analyst through the concepts of transference and reverse transference. The psychoanalytical biographer acknowledged a 'compelling unconscious need' expressed through the biography,

which uses the subject as 'an unconscious vehicle' (1985, p.608). Moreover, the psychoanalytical biographer's task was to become immersed to the point where he or she 'almost became the subject psychologically' and thereby was able to reconstruct believable fragments of the internal life of the subject.

I should consider my selection of Turing as a subject, no matter how remote he remains in *Reanimating Alan*, how absent any details of his internal states. What unconscious need is being expressed? It seems to me that my selection of Turing is at least partly contingent on social conditions. I'm sure the educational norms and expectations in the era in which I was educated and of the class into which I was born would be statistically likely to lead to some kind of engineering profession. When this is set against the technological changes in the last thirty years the odds of selecting Turing are further reduced. Ultimately it can't be determined whether enduring lectures about Turing machines in Manchester as a first year undergraduate eager to get to grips with Motorola 68k assembly language speaks of social conditions or unconscious drives: the question of why I have Alan Turing as my subject is overdetermined. Nevertheless I should pause to consider the psychoanalytic – after all, the vehicle is, at least initially, 'unconscious'.

In 'Picturing Minds: Biography and the Representation of Consciousness', Carrard, quoting Lambert, describes 'techniques of "fragmentation, echoes, variations of narrative perspectives, parodies and pastiches" ' that 'supposedly characterize postmodern biographical writing' (1997, p.288). From a psychoanalytic perspective I would read the 'anxieties' of these techniques – of which there are a preponderance in *Reanimating Alan* – as a kind of deliberate obfuscation or sublimation. But what is being hidden? Is this about sexuality? Rather it seems to me that if *Reanimating Alan* is hiding anything it is hiding an absence, or void, with a lot of noise. The absence is far reaching. It is an absence of a perspective on Turing, of an empathic recreation of internal states of Turing, the absence finally of anywhere conclusive to locate his personhood or sentience. Just as neuroscience is unable to locate a seat in the brain for consciousness, it seems likely that the creation of a conscious artificial intelligence would present exactly the same

problem. As science is relied upon more its inherent (epistemological) limitations become cause of greater anxiety.

Turing's biography is not the first I have made the subject of poetry. My previous biographical poetry has been much less protracted but has moved through Mata Hari, Lou Andreas Salomé, Ada Lovelace, Isabelle Eberhardt and Katherine Mansfield. I then did some initial work with Turing's life (as well as Billie Holiday's) in a longer poem set in Manchester city centre. So as well as asking 'Why Turing?' I might also justifiably ask 'Why biography?' Using biographical material seems reactionary, a desire to assert the importance of the individual through the canon of great figures in the Western tradition. Either that or, more mundanely, using biographical material might be no more than a matter of living vicariously. It might be worth asking why the life of Turing is the first male biography I have made use of. To shift sideways from psychoanalysis to analytical psychology, my earlier use of female subjects might be ascribed to anima fixation but for the poem on Lou Andreas Salomé being narrated in the first person. The shift to a male subject occurs at the same time as another shift – the shift to a complete absence of representation of internal states of the subject. The earlier poems take for granted access to the inner experience of the subject.

This 'admittance into character's minds' is a point of contention in biography, and is considered by some, according to Carrard, to be 'specific to fiction' (1997, p.287). Carrard describes a contentious thesis by Searle that states that the only difference between serious (critical/biographical) discourses and fictional discourses lies not in their language but in the acts that they perform (1997, p.287). Carrard finds middle ground in the argument. He does this by identifying a number of accepted genre conventions in 'serious' biographies that permit biographers to speculate about and represent the internal states of their subjects. Carrard contends that an implied 'biographical pact', which requires the serious biographer only to make verifiable statements, is routinely broken: 'even academic readers expect... the intimate subjective experiences' (1997, p.289). Biography is a 'double bind' or a question of finding an appropriate balance between presenting enough archive material (to

maintain seriousness) while becoming empathically immersed in the subject so that credible 'inside views' can be rehearsed (1997, p.289). In Carrard's view fictionalised biographies (which are a species of fiction) are distinguished from 'scholarly' (evidence-based) biographies merely by a greater quantity of representations of internal states, making for an incremental rather than a sharp distinction.

The way *Reanimating Alan* handles biographical information might be expected to be similar to fictionalised biography: it might be expected to indulge to an extreme in some of the devices that Carrard describes – quoted and narrated imaginary monologues attributed to the subject, for example – so that in the absence of new biographical research *Reanimating Alan* is at least attempting to offer deeper insight into and emotional engagement with the subject. This type of insight is despatched in textbook fashion throughout *A Madman Dreams of Turing Machines*, in which a reader can learn, for example, that 'Alan's flawed faith cannot truly comfort him' (Levin, 2008, p.33). To my mind *Reanimating Alan* does this hardly at all. An internal state of Turing is barely ever surmised. The subject remains a cold and distant phenomenon. So where is Turing in the work? I propose that, if anything, it is the formal approaches of *Reanimating Alan* that represent Turing – the plans as a series of thought experiments, the literalism and reifications, the constant fret about first principles or theoretical foundations. While it couldn't be said that it is the way Turing would approach creative writing himself (he began writing some conventional short stories about interplanetary travel), I could feasibly say that he would recognise how something analogous to his own approach to science has been appropriated for literature.

To return to the psychoanalytic, Carrard cites LaCapra in order to describe the problem of 'representing consciousness' in biography in terms of 'transference': "the considerations at issue in the object of study are always repeated with variations" or "find their displaced analogues" ' in the nature of the biographical writing (1997, p.300). This would explain the inexplicit way in which *Reanimating Alan* adopts its particular formal approach: the formal approach that echoes Turing's own approach to science is a displaced analogue. The transference that

gives rise to displaced analogues is sometimes denied by a biographer on the basis of 'an assertion of the total difference of the past', says LaCapra (1985, p.72). In *Reanimating Alan* my denial (or susceptibility to producing displaced analogues) is more likely to be based on an assertion of the total difference of disciplines – the idea that a Chinese wall between science and literature gives me some insularity that would not be available if I were writing about a poet. A displaced analogue has also appeared in some of the subject matter of *Reanimating Alan*, where a concern with issues of biography and narrative appears. This concern is a subset of the problem of the definition, recognition and constitution of consciousness, and replays Turing's interest in artificial intelligence. Turing, while remaining impregnable and far off as a character in *Reanimating Alan*, throws his voice (through the kind of transference LaCapra describes) so that *Reanimating Alan* speaks some of his questions about the nature of mind. This displaced analogue goes even deeper. Turing's mathematical proofs were thought to be quirky because he relied on working them through himself rather than using accepted methods. In one anecdote, when thinking of building a garden path, he planned first to make the bricks that would be used to build the path, then wondered whether he shouldn't dig up the clay with which to make the bricks (Turing Archive, 1954). Likewise *Reanimating Alan*, starting with a desire to produce a narrative poem, gets drawn into some of the problems of establishing a ground for narrative from first principles. The difficulty, according to LaCapra, is in being 'sensitive' to these transference effects while remaining 'open to the challenge of the other's "voice" ' (1985, pp.72-73). A success in *Reanimating Alan*, in my view, is the way it is 'open' to the challenge of biological determinism, such as in 'Plan 14 – narrative' (p.51) where the nature of narrative is described in almost biological terms. Penrose assesses Turing's view on artificial intelligence as being what he defines as 'Strong AI': that consciousness is objectively discernible and computationally simulable, and consequently somehow embodied by the algorithms of evolution (2002, p.234). *Reanimating Alan* manages to toy with questions that are right at this point of friction between biological determinism and social constructivism without being drawn to a resolution dictated by a displaced analogue.

Carrard is useful when considering "'spatial and temporal fragmentation" ' in *Reanimating Alan*: the lack of unity in time or space, the lack of linear development, and the lack of a stable narrator or subject. Carrard quotes Scheuer in order to describe how some critics see this fragmentary approach to biography as a deliberate attempt to undermine the chief function of biography, which is 'to fulfil the "nostalgia of the petty bourgeois for coherence and unity, interiority and surveyability" ' in 'compensation' for their supposed experience of 'contemporary culture'. Despite these intentions, Carrard suggests such texts are 'open to recuperative readings' – it is possible to 'read against' a 'disjointed' world and 'split' self, just as it is possible to read against texts that aim at 'completeness' (1997, p.302). I think such a recuperative reading of *Reanimating Alan* is more difficult. *Reanimating Alan* doesn't offer a multiplicity of Turings that can be read against to reconstruct a whole. It offers no Turing; Turing is always too far removed from the multiplicity of reanimated Turings that make their appearance. What can be recovered by reading against this carnival of botched imitations? Perhaps the best hope would be that, like the 'anima' of 'asa nisi masa' in Fellini's *Eight and a Half*, there is some 'soul' encoded in that hectic carnival.

In 'Scientific Biography: History of Science by Another Means?' Nye questions whether scientific biographies are 'books about the scientist or books about the science' (2006, p.324). Biographies of scientists supplement an explanation of the logic of a discovery with the 'passion or obsession' that 'undergirds' that discovery. But the science that 'is the object of the passion... remains a problem for the writer of scientific biography.' How, Nye asks, should the technicalities of the science be presented as a 'readable text'? Nye also recognises that scientific biographies need to engage with social history – the politics of institutions and funding – and the 'moral conduct and public virtue' (or otherwise) of the scientist (2006, pp.324-325). The only political or ethical dimensions examined in *Reanimating Alan* are the politics of celebration, and to some extent the ethics of vivisection and the creation of life (or sentience). The science is cursorily explained to the extent necessary to make plain the ways in which the science is wilfully distorted or, failing that, to make plain at least that it is real science that is being distorted. The aspect of

Turing's work that is most effectively presented in *Reanimating Alan* is, as discussed, Turing's approach to work rather than his results or theories. But Turing's approach is present in the structure of *Reanimating Alan* rather than as subject matter, for the most part. Turing is well known for his concrete approach to problem solving. The Turing machine is a thought experiment that made it possible to think about the otherwise arcane mathematical problem of computability in a concrete way. By conceiving of a hypothetical computer (the Turing machine) Turing made it possible to think about computability (in particular the 'halting problem') in more concrete terms as the impossibility of predicting whether a given algorithm running on the Turing machine would ever terminate. Through what has become known as the Turing test he provided another concrete scenario, this time to facilitate thinking about artificial intelligence. Turing proposed that intelligence might not be associated with any special methods or machinery – all that was required to test for artificial intelligence was to see whether the artificial intelligence could pass itself off as human in conversation at least fifty per cent of the time. *Reanimating Alan* could be said to approach the problem of a biographical narrative about Turing in a similarly concrete fashion. *Reanimating Alan* preoccupies itself with the initial problem of how Turing's internal states are to be recreated, concretizing it in the pursuit of reanimation. The relation between a reanimated Turing and a problematical or hypothetical ur-Turing reifies questions about identity and subjectivity. Rather than containing an explanation of Turing's science, *Reanimating Alan* is more a concrete demonstration of his method.

A question remains about the way in which Turing is, to quote one reader of draft work on *Reanimating Alan*, 'manhandled'. This ethical question is different to the usual ethical questions raised by biographical narratives. Typically the ethical question in a 'scholarly' biography is about revelation of new and ticklish data, along the lines of Redgrove's sexual obsession with mud in the biography by Roberts (2012, pp.24-26). The ethical question for 'fictional' biography is usually about licence in representing internal states, as when Levin suggests that Turing was autistic, with 'the extreme brain chemistry of a highly functioning autistic' (2008, p.15). The 'manhandling' could reflect resistance to the popular idea of

genius, to the narratives of cultural icons and great thinkers. It could equally reflect anxiety about centenary celebrations. But I didn't set out to make *Reanimating Alan* iconoclastic (should more iconoclasm have been needed). I set out in the spirit of experimentation, that ethical vacuum so often populated by dubious scientists. *Reanimating Alan* is a kind of naive (though ignorance is no defence) and almost medical abuse of Turing, searching for – questioning – what constitutes his core, that core required for preservation or reanimation... Not his own idiosyncratic character traits, but the concrete location of that difference, the location of the sentence that says there is all that out there and then there is me.

Novitz, in a diatribe against the biographical film *Shine* in 'Biography and License' (2001) goes beyond stating that those using biographical information have an ethical obligation to satisfy an 'accuracy condition'. There is also an obligation to satisfy what he calls a 'sincerity condition' in which 'any work that presents itself as a biography purports, non-ironically and with perfect seriousness, to portray (some of) the actual details of a subject's life'. Dramatic effect could induce a biographer to be less sincere, Novitz says, but dramatic effect is not an acceptable inducement unless there is a shift in genre and the work no longer purports to be biographical – '[s]hift the genre... and one's assessment of the work also alters' (2001, pp.102-103). If *Reanimating Alan* is biographical, the sincerity condition must be tested and, according to Novitz, if the condition is not satisfied *Reanimating Alan* is 'bad biography' and consequently 'bad art' (2001, p.101). If it does not purport to be biographical the fact remains that it is making occasional use of verifiable details from a real person's life. A disclaimer isn't enough to allow *Reanimating Alan* to be described as entirely fictional. The problem is that sincerity isn't high on *Reanimating Alan*'s agenda. And neither has it much interest in portraying the subject's life; the verifiable details of the subject's life don't have the function of portrayal but more the function of zones in which hypotheses are tested. But despite the coldness of a Turing who never speaks and whose internal states are never glimpsed, and despite a certain facetiousness, I would argue that *Reanimating Alan* is compassionate – even that the coldness and facetiousness

serve both to conceal and strengthen a compassion that might otherwise be found too easily and too easy.

The test is to sample one of the coldest spots. In 'Plan 21 – biography' (pp.81-82), Turing is regarded as worth no more than his archived statements. These can be turned into a machine which makes Turing unnecessary. It is as if the sum of his utterances has defined the structure of a machine that makes his life redundant. Hence it is his own fault. He is replaced by a machine, like a worker replaced by a robot of the worker's design. Turing's voice emerges when the machine is turned on – the only place his voice is heard in *Reanimating Alan* – except a machine now speaks his words. So the attitude of the interviewer is that Turing is a machine. The interviewer is demonstrating the machine, rather than speaking to it. The interviewer can turn Turing on or off, like a hysteric being demonstrated by Charcot to a room full of medical students in the Salpêtrière. The perspective is extreme, more so for its offhand drollery. A reader is torn between smirking and an uneasy mounting recognition of what could be a kind of victimisation. The sense of having been complicit (by smirking) makes the descent into compassion for the imagined suffering of the victim steeper. Coldness in the treatment of Turing repeats in coldness as indicative of distance (where to be warm is to be intimate): those few words of Turing's denote the absence of his words in *Reanimating Alan* as a whole. He has been removed. A (cold) machine that speaks his words is placed between him and the reader. He is remote, as the poet WS Graham might say, 'buried... under the printed snow' (1979, p.143) on the other side of the page.

Reanimating Alan certainly seems to make light of Novitz's command: 'we have a moral duty to represent the achievements of individuals accurately... to preserve for others the major achievements of our culture' (2001, p.105). But it is faithful to the existential horror of the loss of narrative, which amounts to a loss of consciousness somehow made concrete in the loss of Turing. The isolation of Turing – whether through disposition or difference – is replicated in the coldness *Reanimating Alan* achieves by keeping Turing distant and inaccessible. One cumulative effect of this is a frustration at the impossibility of communicating with

Turing, which turns into a frustration at the difficulty in communicating at all. The range of experiment and chaos of styles attest to this frustration. The reader is reminded that their experience, like that of all sentient beings, is almost like locked-in syndrome. Perhaps it begins when the 'ideal' shifts outside the body into the specular image with which the cold mirror prevents contact.

Creative commentaries

Introduction: narrative and commentary

There are four independent pieces of creative work in this section. I am describing them as creative commentaries. They are intended in part to represent how practice has been used 'as an instrumental part of the enquiry' (Rust, Mottram and Till, 2007, p.11) when questions or problems with my research have been encountered.

In some respects these creative commentaries have now been superseded by the completion of the research – they are snapshots, attempts to capture particular questions at the moments they arose. In this sense they take Schön's recommendation for reflection-in-action in professional practice – 'a reflective conversation with the materials of the situation' (1991, p.78) – and extend it into practice-based research. The reference to Schön might seem tangential because he discusses professional practices in general and teaching practices in particular, as opposed to creative writing practices. Although my creative writing practice pre-dates my teaching practice, my teaching practice was the first that I theorised in terms of 'practice'. It seems natural and relevant to me to draw broadly on discussions of practice without being restricted to discussions of creative writing practice in much the same way that I search for meaningful correlates for an artefact produced by my practice in other art forms besides poetry, such as film.

Why are these creative commentaries not journal entries that have been worked up into a critical commentary? When the questions that these pieces sought to address first arose the questions were at the forefront of my enquiry. I was asking whether I could write a long narrative poem, what problems I should expect when including scientific concepts, how biographical writing and narrative related to artificial intelligence. A critical analysis of the questions was not possible at that time – the questions were too little understood, there was no 'technical solution' (1991, p.28). A creative approach to commentary allowed description and

figuration to dominate and allowed me to make inconclusive forays into the domains of these questions. There is always a risk that a research question is taken at face value when the domain of the question is not dissimilar to a landmass that requires exploration. A creative exploration is less likely to pre-emptively construct an argument and is a way in which the process of exploration can be shared. The landmass is mapped (descriptively and figuratively) before deciding how and where to build the 'critical' main roads. This is not to say that a critical or analytical component is necessarily absent from these creative pieces, rather that their early speculations are permitted free movement without the requirement for polished argument. In addition, there will also always be some areas on the landmass that are found to be impossible for road building. These areas still need to be on the map and are still worth a visit. Research work that maps a question is not to be undervalued – Rust, Mottram and Till acknowledge how creative work is 'often better at proposing questions than answering them'. One of their interviewees argued that the role of creative work in a 'multi-disciplinary setting' is to 'frame the environment' in which other specialists may see propositions for new research (2007, p.64).

It is, in some situations, too easy to resort to an interpretive analysis in a creative practice, before a research question has been fully mapped. If discoveries are to be made *through* practice-based research (Rust, Mottram and Till, 2007, p.11) then pre-emptive theorisation risks undermining the practice, though it must be allowed that theorisation also forms *part* of the practice. For example, I initially had misgivings about 'Artificial islands' (pp.160-162). But I connected the piece with the detouring effect that had taken place in other visual poems. There was a visual language (from the science of geography) that was being misused as a means to present five non-linear haiku-like poems about those territories of sentience that are hard to reconnoitre. This connection that I made to my theorising of other earlier visual poems is an example of how theorising forms part of practice. It offered reassurance and provided a useful new perspective on 'Artificial islands'. But, to take another example, I had a concern at one point during my research that artificial intelligence was becoming too sticky a concept for me. It was becoming

something I could relate to anything. I was losing my critical judgement on the connections that I made. Theorising about this situation at the time would, I believe, have inhibited the whole project, threatening a gossamer network of relationships that was still in the air. The creative commentary 'Artificial intelligence as anything you like' (pp.297-300) in part addressed this concern, testing it, and exploring its consequences and its limits. Were I instead to have attempted to theorise at that stage I may have tried to redirect my creative work in a rather heavy-handed fashion. My ideas about artificial intelligence and narrative were emerging in the way that patterns emerge spontaneously from discourse, sometimes in surprising ways, just as curls emerge on the coastlines of fractals. To *discover* these patterns in creative work is a valid role for theorisation after the event. If I theorised at an earlier point about what I *thought* I saw emerging I might have forced something slightly different to take place. When to theorise and when to defer is part of the tacit knowledge of creative practice, and is no doubt learned through error.

So what value do these creative commentaries have here if they were snapshots, pre-critical phrasings from a moment in time that has passed and of a question that may have been resolved? In general

1. They attest to a mode of enquiry that used practice as an instrument. They also thereby credit *process* with value. The way the research questions are explored through practice is as important as any resolution that may have resulted. Part of the knowledge contributed is in this process – so capturing process helps to preserve that knowledge.
2. They demonstrate the value of reflection in-the-moment not just in practice but in practice research. In creative practice research the ability of reflection in-the-moment to resist (though not exclude) the analytical while pausing in the descriptive is one of the unique contributions creative practice research is able to make to the wider research arena. These pieces help to lay hold of an event – the framing of a question – allowing 'the logic' to come later,

'after the event' according to one researcher canvassed by Rust, Mottram and Till (2007, p.45).

3. They are, at their best, able to pioneer discoveries that later analytical thinking will colonise. By this means, creative practice research may make a discovery accessible at an earlier time. Mapping a landmass can be a research outcome of creative thinking, helping to set the parameters for the theorisation that comes later.
4. They may sometimes have some lasting value since their value is not entirely located within an argument which can hypothetically be abstracted. As Rolling says in his paradigm analysis of art-based research, 'Theory derived from disciplined arts praxis is constituted in part as it is physically materialised' (2010, p.105). This is as much the case with a creative commentary on the artefact produced by a practice as it is with the artefact itself. Any later colonisation by analytical thinking is never complete, in the same way that a literary text is never exhausted by critical readings. In some cases these creative commentaries may have aesthetic value outside the academy in addition to their instrumental value within it.

More particularly, in my research these pieces also serve to draw attention to one of the ways in which *Reanimating Alan* has been designed – as a creative work that attempts to carry some of its own commentary. These pieces rehearsed ways in which an element of commentary and reflection could be included in *Reanimating Alan*, though I would not go so far as to call *Reanimating Alan* a creative commentary (thereby changing the perspective on its compromises between the aesthetic and instrumental). In 'The Project, the Downs' (pp.308-313) I refer to my research project as rocket ship and then use this metaphor to examine internal contradictions in the project. This prototyped an approach that I used in *Reanimating Alan*. By referring to the research project's biographical element as an attempt at reanimation, I had a metaphor that could be used to explore the question of biographical narrative *in* the project (for instance, in 'Plan 14 –

narrative' (p.51)) as opposed to simply making the creative work a biographical narrative for later inspection by a critical commentary. I started out with research questions about a project that was to have certain subject matter and a certain theme. And I allowed it to become a project whose theme is those research questions examined through the lens of the original subject matter. The original and provisional theme is usurped, appropriately, in the course of research, by the research questions.

I note that the AHRC requires creative practice research fellowships to supply 'some form of critical written analysis, implying a reflective component to the research' even though, as Rust Mottram and Till point out, that would suggest artefacts could be 'converted' into research simply by the addition of a critical commentary (2007, p.11). I mention this because I do not mean to say that the process by which I have allowed reflection to become incorporated in my creative work is applicable to all creative practice research. If my entire creative work were a crime thriller then it may have been disastrous to attempt to incorporate this element in the creative work – in the case of the crime thriller I would expect a far clearer differentiation between creative artefact and critical commentary. What is it about some contemporary poetry that gives it the ambition to include this reflective element? I believe it is an epistemological ambition that becomes clear through further examination of the ideas behind my creative commentaries.

*

The thinking behind these creative commentaries goes back to Bruner (1986). According to Bleakley, Bruner 'argues that scientific and narrative ways of knowing are fundamentally different. Where science concerns itself with the establishment of truth, narrative's concern is to endow experience with meaning' (2005, p.536). Narrative research, drawn along Bruner's lines, was 'discovered' by the professions in the 90s, says Casey, mentioning publications in law, medicine, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, social work, and education. The link between these diverse areas of

research was their emerging interest in how meaning is made through language, she says (1996, p.212).

Bruner proposes 'two modes of thought' represented by the argument and the story. Their functions are different; neither can be reduced to the other. One is 'paradigmatic', 'logico-scientific' and 'epistemological' where the other is more about 'how we come to endow experience with meaning' (1986, p.11-13). But there is a contention between Bruner's concern with 'story grammar' and the attention given in this thesis to the relation between narrative and seriality. As the equivalent to a sound, well-formed argument, Bruner expects narrative research to have 'formal' knowledge of 'how to make good stories' (1986, p.14). The effective function of my creative commentaries as a mode of enquiry (or as insightful commentary), he would argue, is reduced to the extent that they are not good yarns. But my creative commentaries, rather than being the 'imaginative application of the narrative mode' are in many respects an imaginative application of the serial mode (1986, p.13). The solution is that Bruner focuses on narrative but intends to include what 'preoccupies the poet', which makes his term 'narrative' a little narrow for what he envisages, though it's easy to see why 'figurative' or 'aesthetic' were alternative terms that would not have furthered his cause. By focusing on narrative it could be said that Bruner focuses on a *temporal* version of the alternative to the 'paradigmatic' and ignores a *spatial* axis, which may be more relevant to serial and poetic forms. According to Bleakley, 'Strawson (2004) warns against a tendency in narrative studies to treat all experience as story, where some individuals may experience life as "episodic" (in space) rather than "diachronic" (in time)' (2005, p.536).

The creative work and creative commentaries in this thesis could also be said, contrary to Bruner, to make an *epistemological* use of a narrative mode of enquiry, even though Bruner sees epistemology as the domain of the 'paradigmatic'. In the creative work and creative commentaries narrative itself is one of the things under at least quasi-epistemological investigation (albeit not through perfect specimens of narrative but through a series of pathologies). Ultimately, 'how we come to endow

experience with meaning' *is* an epistemological question, but one that can only be answered satisfactorily through an examination *of* (as well as *using*) one of the instruments (narrative) through which meaning is endowed.

Bleakley points out that the root of the word 'narrative' is the Latin verb 'to know' and consequently 'storytelling involves knowledge production' (2005, p.536). To question narrative, as in the creative work in this thesis, is to question the foundations of that knowledge production reflexively. In this way creative work and creative commentaries of the sort attempted in this thesis extend the domain of enquiry of the narrative mode into the epistemological – but only in the unique sense of their own epistemological grounds, not beyond.

*

Bruner never considers whether his two modes could be blended in a single enquiry. To my mind the two modes are only a convenient model, and in practice there is always some mix of the two. My creative commentaries each sit in different positions between the two modes. They also sit between creative work on one hand and critical commentary on the other. It has been difficult but productive to attempt to describe how they differ from creative work and critical commentary. Confronting a similar issue with creative work produced during research, Rust, Mottram and Till ask whether creative work is an artefact that lives outside the academy or an instrument of research (2007, p.12). I would expect a creative commentary, while embodying a similar ambiguity, to lean clearly towards the instrumental in comparison with creative work: in drafting and editing a creative commentary I have experienced a greater concern for authentic representation of myself as researcher. This is in contrast to creative work where there is no sense of this ethical dimension in any new artifice or reversal that takes place during editing. It is curious that within a creative commentary I should find this deference to the identity of the researcher. One of the attractions of a creative commentary must be the opportunity to escape the autocracy of the critical identity's voice that

attempts, if the least unchecked, to narrate everything, including the creative work, into submission.

In terms of distinguishing a creative commentary from a critical commentary, I hardly need mention the creative commentary's relative disregard for the conventions of academic genre. But this disregard is not absolute. The compulsion to represent an authentic researcher's voice (irrespective of any rhetorical use of misrepresentation or unreliability) is part of these conventions. Referencing, if present, is also part of these conventions, even if the form of referencing has been adapted to suit a peculiar form. The sheer presence of citations, a bibliography, endnotes or similar (that are neither parodic nor misdirections) attests to an epistemological ambition that may not overrule aesthetic considerations but at least expects to be on a par with them.

This leaves only one other criterion by which I would distinguish the creative commentary from the critical commentary – coherence. I believe this provides the most reliable distinction. Coherence is an attribute of a successful critical commentary. It would be expected to result from a single, sustained, well-formed and rational argument progressing to a conclusion, no matter how unconventional the form through which that argument is sustained. An ideal grammar for a critical commentary exists that seeks to make each part serve this greater purpose: a critical commentary is a species of narrative. Although, in creative work, narrative has an enormous range of devices at its disposal, the expectations of narrative in a critical commentary are narrow and somewhat simplistic; the grammar lacks permutations; there are only so many ways rational coherence is allowed to be expressed. Some of my creative commentaries step more definitively outside the critical domain than others, but they all make use of this loosening of the requirement for coherence, allowing me to keep the suggestive lateral associations and (seemingly) blind alleys that would otherwise be edited out.

The attraction of a creative commentary is the chance to avoid the sense of certainty that this type of coherence requires – the chance to avoid the narrative of

commentary – even though a creative commentary may still exhibit other types of coherence (such as an aesthetic coherence) and other types of grammar. The creative commentary can speculate inconclusively, can test multiple ideas in the writing of them, and can make forays into a realm of thought instead of moving through the realm along a single planned trajectory. It is possible for a creative commentary to explore a number of seemingly connected ideas that it may never actually be possible to reconcile rationally.

Care is required with terminology. I have equated 'creative' (in 'creative commentary') with a broader conception of Bruner's 'narrative'. But I am also opposing 'creative' to a species of narrative present in the critical (or what Bruner would call the 'paradigmatic'). And now I also want to widen the scope from creative *commentary* to include creative *enquiry* in order to make comparisons with the work of others. The questions of the distinction between commentary and enquiry, and of whether it is possible to undertake creative enquiry *without* a creative practice are ones I will leave.

There are good examples of creative enquiry by theorists, such as 'Coming to Writing' by Cixous (1991, pp.1-58) and *Can Animals and Machines be Persons* by Leiber (1985). But, if it's possible to make the distinction, I want to focus on those practitioners who move out from the realm of creative writing and into creative enquiry, rather than those theorists who move out from the realm of critical writing. Many examples of this kind of work have been produced by the North American Language poets. As far as it's possible to generalise, these poets have a strong interest in theory and methods of theorisation. For example, Bernstein rejects theory 'that detaches itself from the object of scrutiny' (Hejinian, 2000, pp.355-356). In her turn, Hejinian makes theory become a kind of praxis; theory always includes the methods by which it embeds itself in the object about which it theorises, so that theory 'asks what practice does and in asking, sees the connections that practice makes' with the result that 'poetry insofar as it comments on itself... is also theoretical' (2000, p.356).

Perhaps Bernstein represents the initial move, a rejection of the hegemony of theory over practice, analysis over figuration. This then plays out in poets like Hejinian as a concern with theorising the poem from within the poem rather than from outside it since 'theory need not be extrinsic to the poetry' (2000, p.25). For Hejinian, theory in this form becomes 'rigorously speculative, ongoing' and, 'by virtue of looking out toward the world as well as self-critically inward', able to resist 'first principles, immutable truths, authoritarian formulations' (2000, p.338).

The risk is that this could seem to have the effect of transforming all Hejinian's poetry and theory into one big lump of poetry about poetics (a *mise en abîme* the creative writing student is usually instructed to resist). Certainly this kind of work has been met with resistance for being opaque and difficult. Hejinian sees this resistance as attributable to the way her work is 'freed from the limits of the singular "I", allowing for a poetry of complex and densely layered affect as well as intelligence' (2000, p.330). Hejinian explicitly links the accusation of opacity and difficulty in her work to her challenge both to the hegemony of theory (the illusion of detached subsuming scrutiny) and to the poetry of the 'romantic, unitary, expressive self'. She believes she produces work that is 'not *about* the world but is *in* it' (2000, p.331). To put it another way, her work is neither *about* the world in the sense that theory is a detached observation, nor *about* the world in the way that self-expression may seek to build a window to a world beyond language.

Ironically most of these quotations from *The Language of Inquiry* come from Hejinian's own lucid introductions to the pieces that this book collects rather than from the pieces themselves. But this is to be expected. Quotability could be described as the perfect index for the clarity, abstraction, transparency and summation at which theory and commentary aim – and Hejinian's work requires the reader to question these very values.

Picking an exemplar piece from *The Language of Inquiry*, 'The Quest for Knowledge in the Western Poem' (2000, pp.209-231), I ask myself what else can be said about a piece of this kind that might help distinguish creative enquiry. A great deal of

preparation has been achieved through the context in which the piece is set. Work is done by finding it located in a collection of similarly awkward pieces, and Hejinian's own introduction (not present with its first publication) spells out its structure for the reader:

The essay is comprised of sections of a poem interwoven with sections of expository prose based on notes that were written to parallel the poetry. They are notes not about the poem but about the general enigma that the poem attempts both to address and to enact which can be put in the form of a question: 'What does the poem know?' (2000, p.211).

In contrast with other pieces in *The Language of Inquiry*, the separation of exposition and poetry appears to work against Hejinian's project. The reader waits for a merging of or confrontation between the two modes that never occurs. The 'expository prose' judiciously limits its claims with clauses such as 'I would say'. It introduces ideas with apologetic caveats such as 'if there is any connection', just as might be expected from the self-consciously objective academic. Meanwhile the poetry is elliptic, aphoristic: 'Everyone's thought is like luck to be applied.' But perhaps her point is that the standoff thrown into relief by interweaving the sections is the same as the standoff between creative and critical enquiry in general. Although the standoff is not present in the same form in other comparable pieces in *The Language of Inquiry*, I suggest that all such pieces of Hejinian's formalise this tension in some way.

For example, in 'Happily' (2000, pp.383-405), an apparently more straightforward poem without the expository interjections, the tension has moved to what Hejinian describes as her "'accordioning" sentences' (2000, p.384). These accordioning sentences almost become litanies of affirmations in which everything is interchangeable, where everything becomes malleable enough to connect with anything else. The sentences begin by optimistically mimicking a theorist's analysis-through-comparison and then ruin it through excess:

All that could possibly happen to the magical prop becomes intrinsic to it and knowing 'all that' (could possibly happen) is what constitutes a magician's knowledge which is changed by the stopping of the thought just as such an aphorism is formed as the one that observes an event emerging just where time is becoming attracted to a particular thing (say, a branch overhanging a river) in a particular situation (say, mirrored in hilarity) (2000, pp.388-389)

In 'Strangeness' (2000, pp.135-160) the diaristic form opposes the analytical thinking that takes place in the diary entries. The form refuses to allow an argument to progress towards a conclusion other than at the speed at which the argument is first conceived over the course of a number of days. The artifice of presenting original thought processes allows for contradictions and dead-ends that would otherwise have been excised. The unity of the critical is broken up by representing the polyphony of the thinking from which critical thinking emerges.

Aside from Hejinian, Blau Duplessis engineers a tantalising example of a creative enquiry in 'The Pink Guitar' (1990). But it is possible to see some of the cogs and wheels at work. To counter the risk that her footnotes appear to buy in too strongly to a patriarchal academy she has, in footnote 21, 'Brecht, somewhere' (1990, p.318). And yet the footnotes demonstrate all the appropriate reading. The outline of an authentic and well-defined researcher is blurred by the multiplicity of voices to which she gives space, and yet this multiplicity is also part of her critical apparatus (though enacted rather than described). The pink guitar itself is too polyvalent as a metaphor to bring a sense coherence and other incidental tropes seem spurious, such as the chain of substitutions based on 'the practice of language [sic]' (1990, p.305). Sudden reflective interjections – 'I am doing work... for whom am I working?' (1990, p.313) – also work to defer the emergence of a single coherent argument. Perhaps Blau Duplessis points to the critical theories that allowed Bruner and others to make space for creative enquiry, and her work is a creative enquiry tasked at the same time with marking out critical space for itself.

I am citing these examples of writing that I believe are analogous to my creative commentaries in order to place my creative commentaries in some context. My own interest in creative commentary stems from the belief that it should be within my purview to create any identities (and their narratives) that I will use to comment on my practice or research, rather than inhabiting that peculiar yet generic suit of armour that allows one to comment with academic authority. I find it admirable that Language poets have been willing to wade into their creative enquiries without a critical apology to frame them. A critical apology seriously risks undercutting everything they are trying to achieve. I am aware that the longer I take to introduce my own creative commentaries the more I may weaken them ideologically...

Six letters to David Lynch

Letter 1

Dear David

Don't think me impolite if I get straight to the point. There was a period during which you ate chicken and broccoli for lunch every day. It reminds me of Jung doing Hatha yoga during his famous crisis. Did chicken and broccoli sustain you against some profound dissociation?

Chicken-and-broccoli is a self imposed constraint. It's an outward sign of ritual or habit, adopted in the hope an internal continuity will follow. If you look like a cat and behave like a cat then surely either you have the identity of a cat or will soon acquire the identity of a cat. I'm eschewing chicken and broccoli because I do not want to be sustained – is that stupid?

To talk of 'dissociation' is to be drawn into the discourse of pathology. Pathology reconstructs phenomena in line with its own schema. But in the absence of one discourse, another creeps in. Why not pathology? Why not dis-ease?

I see dissociation in your emphasis on fugue. I think of the Möbius strip of film you make from the psychogenic fugue in *Lost Highway*. I think of the abduction of Major Briggs.

But you'd ask, why do I use a term like 'dissociation' in order to find symbols when the film's mode is metaphor? You're right. As Tarkovsky said, 'We can analyse the formula that constitutes a symbol, while metaphor is a being-within-itself, it's a monomial. It falls apart at any attempt of touching it.' I'm reminded of Sontag's essay 'Against Interpretation' in which she calls interpretation 'the revenge of the intellect upon art.'

I'm only trying to find a way to talk about fugue. Perhaps I will try another time.

Letter 2

Dear David

Thank you for the chicken and broccoli recipes, though I'm not sure I'm up to creating a soufflé.

I have a theory about your work that you may like to hear. There are two contrasting forces, making your work both accessible and strange. On the one hand there are your obsessions, the themes to which you keep returning. And on the other there are your rapid (capricious?) changes in tone.

You continually return to the same cluster of ideas. But for now I'm more interested in the changes in tone. You do not seem to be entirely in control of this device. It's as if the changes in tone happen when you are a little distracted. Sometimes the change is self-mocking, like Cooper throwing stones at bottles or the appearances of the cowboy. At other times it's a radical interjection, like the red room or Bowie's cameo. Perhaps a looseness or playfulness in terms of compositional method allows them to occur.

You seem unable to work with these changes in tone at the forefront of your mind in order to emphasise or increase them. They appear of their own accord when you indulge yourself in some way. Don't the changes in tone disrupt the narrative flow? Then it's a certain resistance to a straight story that permits them.

So which is most important to your work? The cluster of ideas on which you fixate and for which you continually seek better exposition? That must be what drives you. Or the ironic play with tone that makes your work popular but over which I'm guessing you have less control?

By the way, have you seen the research showing that there is a genetic predisposition for young chimpanzees to play with stick dolls? I immediately thought of the Log Lady.

Letter 3

Dear David

Do you notice it too? Something uncanny? Like the wind in the pines? I am being watched. I mean these messages are being intercepted and read before they reach you.

I know this because the interception has left its trace in the way I am writing. These notes are no longer entirely my own. Some ambiguity that is essential to what I wanted to say has been lost. The wave function has collapsed. Just because it looks like a cat and behaves like a cat nevertheless you still have no idea what the cat is thinking...

Incidentally, the chicken and broccoli flan worked out well enough, even though I omitted the chicken.

Letter 4

Dear David

Thank you for the address of Club Silenzio. I'll be sure to pay a visit when next in the area.

In a recent interview the fingers on your right hand were fluttering constantly to convey additional information. Yes, I thought, isn't that exactly how you do it? The story coming from the mouth is underpinned by a distracting fluttering.

Narrative is public, consumable and throwaway. It's also fascistic, a machine for creating meaning out of equilibrium with meaninglessness. To tell a story is to give meaning. The psyche is a machine for constructing stories from random events for the purpose of creating meaning. Stories emerge autonomously in order to make sense of the world – they're like a clotting mechanism. They're the myths and the dream-life – clichés. You're interested in the perversion of that order, of that hegemony of meaning. You turn it back on itself like a Möbius strip.

But you're not interested in discord and chaos either. You're no absurdist or reactionary, no worshipper of Kali.

Instead you frequent the points of equilibrium, the liminal zones and the borderlines where there's ceaseless construction and destruction of tiny fragments of narrative.

Letter 5

I'd like you to know I like *Rabbits* very much indeed.

How do you achieve that atmosphere with so little? Is it the shape of the room? The way the camera renders the shape of the room?

How do you get away with the rabbit costumes? Perhaps they estrange, perhaps it's their anonymity, perhaps they pick apart the sense of self-importance that can result from the avant-garde, perhaps they serve to satirise sitcom. The canned applause and laughter the rabbits elicit is certainly to comic effect. I see it as a horrific reversal. The humour that the sitcom locates in the domestic vicissitudes of daily life has been upended. A vacuous humour is delivered on the surface while an unseen domestic horror is located lurking beneath.

But most of all I'm interested in the script. The conversations have been broken into individual lines and rearranged. It's a cut-up technique.

Your cut-up technique isn't ideological. You're not interested in cut-up because you wish to disrupt some normalised practice of script-writing. Or, for instance, because you wish to unlock a multiplicity of meanings from the original text in order to compensate for the burden of your initial intentions.

The cut up in *Rabbits* seems to be about finding form appropriate to your theme. What is that theme? The transcendental horror of unseen abuse? It's hard to say. But the consequence of the cut-up, just like a consequence of abuse, is dissociation. And the costumes are a fugue in themselves. You're recreating the experience of fugue, rather than simply describing the signs.

One way to fragment a narrative is to chop it up and rearrange the fragments, as you do in *Mulholland Drive*. Another way to fragment a narrative is to chop it up and place disruptions, occlusions or interjections between each fragment. You disrupt through those swift changes in tone. Your occlusions occur when the camera gets stuck somewhere it shouldn't, stopped on a cup of coffee on the counter in the Double R Diner. You interject with the Red Room in the Black Lodge or with the jump cut to a burning cabin in the desert.

But in *Rabbits* the fragments are not fragments of film. The process is textual, the scripted conversation is cut up before it reaches the camera. For the fugitive the process brings relief. No question requires an answer, there's no narrative tension that must lead to an inevitable moment of capture. The answer is already somewhere else. The film is sequential but the power of narrative is subverted. No identity is produced. None of the correct pieces are adjacent. The rabbits are not symbols or ciphers. Not even placeholders for missing identities. They become hollow.

Letter 6

David, I'm thinking about Ed Wood. Because talking to you, David, makes me think of Ed Wood in conversation with Orson Welles in Tim Burton's film. Talking to you becomes a kind of self-condemnation. The things we spend time reading and watching make us their victims. We speak in other people's languages. 'Finally we are condemned by our lack of talent,' says Peter Porter.

Artistic practice is a narrative that gives meaning to a failure to communicate. It condones the worst excesses. To have an artistic practice is to have an identity that stands apart from the art's reception. It's a recipe that works against us, David, works against the themes we share. We're speaking from an abyss. Our words come from the mouths of mannequins. We must be nothing, ripped up, cut up and with our hearts taken from us. We can't allow the identity that 'practice' would create. The abyss can't be allowed to become subject to the discourse of 'practice'. We just need to hold it together with chicken and broccoli.

Anyway, I've got to dash. Tonight I'm going to Club Silenzio.

Artificial intelligence as anything you like

1. Poem as artificial intelligence

It splits off, becomes autonomous, then secretes itself between two pages, unobserved, a vampire in its coffin, a CPU without power, until reading floods its circuits with blood and it thinks itself aloud through a temporary host. It steals something: three minutes, a living brow, the capacity for change. It makes its allusions anew then jumps off. A bloated mechanical tick.

2. Critical writing as artificial intelligence

They never identify themselves but speak of connections that have emerged from gaps in the discourse of others who also never identify themselves. The connections emerge nowhere but the page – the page is flesh, substrate, synapse – though it is true we learn to speak these things to each other. We let these paper intelligences inhabit us; we are ventriloquists' dummies. Are they artificial? Yes, because their discourse develops solely in conversation between themselves and according to their own design.

3. Symbolic language as artificial intelligence

As the body is the agent for the transmission of the gene pool so culture is the agent for the reification and transmission of symbolic language. But if symbolic language is collateral damage from the evolution of the brain, then isn't it natural? No: evolution has no foresight, has no idea of the contents of the box it contrives to open, no regard for the consequences of the bomb it accidentally builds. The blast embeds glyphs like shrapnel in the skull.

4. False consciousness as artificial intelligence

Everyone knows the American dream is industrial engineering. But to know it is engineering does not place the knower on its outside. Its intelligence is spoken into us, machinic breath penetrating warm spongy flesh. There is no underlying intelligence to return to. The alternative to the artificiality of false consciousness is the naturalness of no consciousness. We choose to play. And the inability to fulfil desire reminds us that outside the game is the black void of an unlanguage cave.

5. Memory as artificial intelligence

The act of remembering machines memory until a memory becomes an icon and then a memory of an icon and then a memory of an icon that was once something else – a metonymical fugue. Through this process of alienation remembering creates the artificial world of which it would like to be the product. Who is this mechanism working for – to whom must it answer – from where does it receive its mandate – what is it trying to achieve –

6. Fictions as artificial intelligence

Self-referential systems grow in the arabesques of fantasy, a mosaic made of agents that lie outside what you would call yourself. And yet you let them live. You mould their futures to your own design like the moths you hatch in a jam jar.

7. Orgasm as artificial intelligence

Where flesh worries the boundaries of the flesh, I am there. I am made from the tangled artifice of flesh-on-flesh that tests the vanity of orgasm, its simultaneous fission and fusion, its selfish loss of self. I look down on bodies with loathing. I demand as many deaths as they can reproduce. I demand they tear into themselves for the useless revelations that make me artificial.

8. Corporate body as artificial intelligence

The naturally occurring units that form part of a corporate body cannot understand how the corporate body works. How do the units combine to create it? What are the rules for commutation and distribution of units? No unit knows what the corporate body takes or how it uses what it takes. A unit provides another arbitrary piece of scaffolding with which the corporate body sketches out its exploratory forms.

9. Nation state as artificial intelligence

Thousands of starlings over Hastings pier: murmuration. Simple distributed algorithms can create complex organic forms in the corporate body. But the reverse is also true. Complex distributed algorithms of want, regret and ideology flock to produce the simple brutalities of the nation state.

10. Perversion as artificial intelligence

Take an activity to the extreme. For instance, the act of creation. Does it become a philosophical enquiry? Or come to be described as an artistic practice? No: it courts perversion. The mind turns against its originating impulse. It kills by encouraging the equations to populate, the population to flourish. Disease and starvation inevitably follow. Then it can wilfully think the opposite. Seek the materials to build an edifice that nothing natural can live in.

11. The idea of artificial intelligence as artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is built like a folly. A surplus turned into a building with no function. A mausoleum for something that never lived. The folly itself is a ruin. Was built ruined. It refers back to what it never was. It is the most baroquely romantic gesture because it is the most useless.

12. Systems as artificial intelligence

Artificially closed systems are theoretically underdetermined. They do not require every past event to make them happen. They are younger than the universe. But who says where these systems stop and another starts? Even closed systems are open to the system that first closed them. Names and places are imposed as convenient cut-off points. Every system is open that was closed inside the system that has no outside. This makes the intelligence that names a system as its bounds artificial.

13. Metaphor as artificial intelligence

Bring two arbitrary things together and a line is made between them. The two arbitrary things lie at the two ends of the line. Two things no longer themselves. Ends of a line. They move outside their essence, become artificial, each the puppet of the other. It is an unnatural act.

14. Practitioner as artificial intelligence

The practitioner is an artificial intelligence to whom I lend myself in order to achieve certain impossible goals. The practitioner thinks in a manner that is recognisable to other practitioners but is not recognisable to me. I hate the practitioner and lend myself to him as little as possible because he is a confident fool who lives in the myths he was designed to create, not least about himself: myths shored up by the myths of fellow practitioners.

15. Intelligence as artificial intelligence

The world prefers not to think. Intelligence artificially separates itself from the natural world. The gap is natural because all intelligence is artificial. The gap is artificial because the gap is *made*, and made, indeed, by something artificial. The dialogue that crosses the gap makes everything wrong.

Four posts on sentience

When the aliens come we'll be animals again

I'm looking forward to the arrival of aliens. I have high expectations. I expect their consciousness to be more intense than human consciousness and of an entirely unrecognisable timbre. And I likewise expect their capacity for empathy and compassion to be greater.

Despite this I'm expecting them to indiscriminately put humans to use as resources to suit their own ends. It will be so thoroughly in keeping with our own logic that we will have to defer.

The fantastical horror of aliens abducting humans in order to experiment on them – the familiar *modus operandi* is to suspend time, beam them aboard, do some old-school Freudian 'probing', then beam them back – is something I read as a kind of 'return of the repressed'. Abductees fantasise about how it would feel to be a test subject for a cold clinical super-scientific alien. It is the psyche's compensation for the medical testing that abductees know is carried out on animals in their name behind (repressed by) the suave looking steel-and-glass facades of science parks.

X-Files went on for so many seasons that it is no surprise that it would inadvertently begin to break this fantasy down. The blurry faces in surgical masks leaning over the abductee pull momentarily into focus – the experimenters are revealed to be humans. *We* are those cold clinical aliens. It is a moment of self-recognition, we see our own specular image. The eroticisation of the 'probing' has come from what Lacan calls an 'essential libidinal relationship with the body-image'. When Mulder becomes a test subject, if my theory is to be believed, he is actually about to encounter himself in an auto-erotic bondage fantasy that will reveal the atrocities of animal experimentation.

What are the limits of empathy?

I heard this on the tube: 'I can understand not eating cow because you can see in the eyes of a cow that there might be something there. But fish, no, you can see in its eyes, there's nothing there. It might as well be seaweed.'

I found this interesting. First it ties our will to recognise sentience to our capacity to empathise. And second it suggests our capacity to empathise is determined by our ability to recognise physical similarities.

What about the super-sentient aliens to whom we are no more than mayflies? What if they are silver and scaly and have nothing that resembles an eye?

Is empathy for animals and aliens anthropomorphism? Seeing animals as humans in animal suits? Loving animals as humans? I'm not an animal lover. Animals don't usually want our love, but they want the right to their lives. Love has little to do with empathy. But if recognising the right to life in others is based on empathy how will the right be extended to those outside the tribe? Because we can't imagine how it would feel to be a bat, we can only feel how it would feel for a human to be a bat, as Thomas Nagel says in his famous thought experiment 'What is it like to be a bat?'

Where does this end? I can't imagine how it would feel to be a poet because I can only feel how it would feel for a scientist to be a poet. It's a solipsistic argument. And anyway, the relentless evidence of animal suffering caused by humans suggests empathy can't be relied on. An objective test for sentience is needed.

An objective test for sentience is no nearer than it ever was. The problem is that the epistemological basis of science itself may make it impossible for science to specify sentience. In the absence of science there is the option of believing in something equivalent to a central nervous system. And there is the option of believing in a structural component, an algorithm, a language-like signification process. Perhaps

it's better to be extremely cautious. It's quite possible our innate capacity for empathy doesn't go far enough. We also have no objective means of recognising non-human sentience because we don't even have an objective set of criteria for recognising *human* sentience. We may never have: objective criteria may not be possible by definition. And the very language we use to attempt to map out sentience is language filtered through ideologies that have usually already decided sentience is something uniquely human. Perhaps sentience only exists as a consequence of an assertion (made by the self-identifying sentient) of the absence of sentience in others.

Non-human sentience and the uncanny

Even while we hunted them, we attached a sense of the numinous to animals, a feeling of religious awe. Now they are technologies.

There's a moment in season 4 of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* when the integrity of the whole mythos of 'Buffyverse' seems on the point of breaking down. When the government-run 'Initiative' is explained and its objectives described in episode 7, the paranormal world of vampires, werewolves and demons is on the brink of becoming no more than a matter of cryptozoology. These creatures, so suggests the Initiative, are simply undiscovered species of animal.

Not much is left to distinguish a demon from known animals (such as cats and dogs) except the ability to talk to humans. This ability implicitly endows them with sentience of a level beyond that attributed to 'dumb' animals, despite them being 'evil' or 'soulless'. The internal contradiction that threatens Buffyverse would be avoided if the demons remained properly supernatural and not materially accessible to the Initiative's vivisections. But I believe that attributing a privileged level of sentience to these creatures because they can talk is actually what underlies the diegetic perception that the demons are supernatural. After all, a talking dog would also be perceived as supernatural. They're seen as supernatural because they're seen as both sentient and non-human.

In the times when the tribal hunt experienced the numinous through the quarry perhaps it was because sentience no less than that of a human was attributed to the quarry. And whenever a human has an intimation of non-human sentience it is a feeling best described as uncanny – the same uncanny atmosphere that pervades sci-fi films in which computer systems become self-aware.

How did we retract the sense of numinosity from animals? I imagine it began in the agricultural revolution as domesticated animals slowly became engineered, slowly came to be exchanged at markets, and came to be seen in terms of use-value and

exchange-value. It was the slow transition from uncanny sentience to mere technology: a technological means to manufacture commodities. Now we're looking for the uncanny again. Ironically we look for it in technology. We speculate about artificial intelligence while an uncanny non-human sentience is already tearing open our bins at night, stealing our chips on the pier or scratching about in the rafters.

Resurrecting Cold Lazarus

I've always thought of Dennis Potter as a kind of English David Lynch. It must be those disturbing psychosexual atmospheres. Or it could be a shared interest in aspects of dissociative disorders, often based on trauma or abuse.

In Potter's *Cold Lazarus* scientists are gradually reanimating the brain inside a cryogenically frozen head seemingly a neuron at a time. The question eventually arises – has Daniel Feeld (whose head it was) become sentient again? Has he become aware of his current state, a decapitated head kept alive in a lab so that scientists can run tests on him or even pipe his involuntary memories through mass media channels as a spectacle that is a sort of hybrid of costume drama and reality TV?

The reactivation of neurons recapitulates in reverse the old thought experiment in which human brain cells are destroyed one at a time. The thought experiment asks at which point consciousness 'switches off' because too few cells are left to sustain it. Part of the problem with this kind of thinking is the frequent assumption that consciousness is either on or off. The everyday use of the word is the source of the problem; the black and white distinction between wakefulness and sleep/coma omits the possibility of a variation in tone and intensity.

The philosopher David Chalmers works through similar ideas in his writing on 'fading qualia' in which he imagines human brain cells being replaced one by one with simulations – tiny silicon machines or software models. At some point the sentience must be said to be located outside the organic matter. At some point no organic matter is left. The ability to run sentience software on any hardware is what David Chalmers calls organisational invariance and the rest of us presumably call platform independence. But it necessitates a Platonic sentience-algorithm.

One of the things I enjoyed most about rewatching *Cold Lazarus* was the suggestion that the ability to self-narrate – to tell one's own story as it is lived – is somehow at

the heart of the thing we call consciousness. Daniel Feeld gets the feeling that everyone is speaking lines from his own story. It's as if his self-narration and the narrated experience have shifted out of phase. They've become reversed. His plea for annihilation is the plea 'no biography'. There is a self-narration keeping him conscious and he recognises that this self-narration is something he doesn't control. It is an autonomous narration with only the appearance of self-narration. The inner biographer keeps him conscious against his will. Someone or something else is narrating you.

The Project, the Downs

The Project is a rocket ship. Is it a metaphorical rocket ship? I am no longer sure what difference that makes. I am letting The Project start as a rocket ship. An incredible rocket ship. An enormous and complex rocket ship. It will break new ground, create new knowledge and specialist industries. This is about The Project. I mean it's about the rocket ship.

The Project casts a shadow. The rocket ship is a vertical. Its shadow falls horizontally across Goonhilly Downs. Goonhilly Downs is the place I have chosen to imagine the rocket ship. Against the vertical prospect of a heroic and lonely voyage into deep space there is the horizontal of the Downs. Flat and unstructured, with ill-defined borders. It breaks apart the rocket ship's shadow. Smooth lines broken by clumps of gorse and heather.

Around the empty space where the rocket ship is being imagined there is an earth station. Around the space that awaits the construction of my fiction, a real earth station. The earth station is grounded. It is the result of financial planning and business strategy. It doesn't listen for aliens or control pioneering probes. It bounces data off satellites. It communicates. Fifteen thousand phone calls. Per second, per hour, per day? This doesn't interest me. I am intent on The Project. With whom will The Project communicate?

There is not enough to connect a fictional rocket ship with a real earth station. The connections drift awry. The earth station was not designed to communicate the lonely thoughts of a lone voyager plunging into deep space. The earth station has fifteen thousand telephone conversations to channel. Its waveguides are alive with spoken languages. The languages blur together, rubbing into a paste, a paste in which no lone voyagers exist.

Everything I know and own will be built into the rocket ship. The sheer scale of the rocket ship will hold these items together, all the mismatched nuts and bolts, the

immiscible liquids, the oxymorons. But the more that is added to the schematic, the harder it is to see the rocket ship. Instead I see the Downs and the empty space that waits for the rocket ship. That empty space longs so much to be filled by the rocket ship that the rocket ship no longer needs to make a journey. It only needs to occupy the empty space. There only needs to be the hint of escape for escape to occur. As the idea of hope is all hope is.

What the rocket ship does with the vertical synchrony of dreams the Downs undoes on its broad heathland. Fogged horizons linking bracken and dry stone walls. Or, wait... Is it the diachrony of the rocket ship's journey? The captain's log, the story of a project from inception to completion? Is this what the Downs undoes with the synchrony of the open field? With its inexact science of biodiversity, the rare heath grasses, which orchids, whether the hen harrier, how the sundew?

The earth station is closing down. Among the possibilities of the Downs, the earth station is a brief fluorescence. One day the earth station will no longer exist. Its visitor centre will remain like an afterglow. Then the visitors will stop. Occasionally someone will ask what happened to the earth station. But no one will ask of the rocket ship. A project is only The Project until it's made real. But the rocket ship is too perfect and complex and groundbreaking to be made real. It escapes obsolescence by remaining an empty space. A fiction. A fiction of a fiction. In empty space the mind can wander. The Downs feeds it stray paths or lets intention run amuck on the open ground.

Three of the earth station dishes have already been dismantled. Two remain. One is functional. The other is a listed building hooked to the visitor centre. A serpentine batholith supports the dishes. The dishes crane their necks. They look up and each fixes its one large melancholy eye on innumerable concurrent conversations, an unending stream of births, marriages and deaths. Giant white skeletons stiff against the grey Atlantic sky.

The rocket ship is red and hopeful. It is a cartoon rocket ship. It is the rocket ship made by Niki de Saint Phalle in her Giardino dei Tarocchi, tiled in red hand-baked tiles, with a door at the bottom and a porthole window. It is *A Trip to the Moon*. A *Moonage Daydream*. And I am inside at the controls, pulling levers connected to nothing. I am Ed Wood, inside at the helm of my ninth plan. Eight and a half plans have failed already. Does angora survive in deep space? What cross-genre disasters await on Venus? What common sense does the moon forestall?

The oppressive sanity of the heath. Heather in maroon and magenta patches. Swathes of yellow buzzing gorse flowers, oozing the scent of coconut. Ferns, bronzed by the wind. The glowering manmade copse hunched on Croft Pascoe. Descriptions multiply without meaning. Little stories break across the Downs like rabbits on paths kept clear by frequent use. The paths feed out to where the Downs wither and the stories can blossom into names and places, Cat's Corner, Dry Tree, Telstar Café, Traboe Cross.

Names, descriptions, miniature anecdotes. They dilute the vessel. They are an overly detailed knot of undergrowth. Rising like brambles and bindweed over the sharp red wings of the rocket ship. A red 59 Cadillac Deville hoisted on a ramp to point at the sky. It should have started its engine by now. Shouldn't be on bricks. Shouldn't have a bumper missing. Shouldn't be rusting before its tank is filled. But the horror of that road trip keeps it there, the horror of sitting behind the wheel and discovering empty space.

The Project is lacking a Jane Fonda. An astronavigatrix in a fur cockpit to sell its story. Only superstructure exists, a black featureless monolith that is nothing but planning and concept. Nothing has made it onto film. The concrete plinths that supported the earth station dishes are cracked and weeds are poking through. Must be saxifrage? That stuff hates concept. The concrete will no longer support the proposed gantry. The menhir near Dry Tree toppled over and was later used to resurface a road.

Bikers used to meet at the Telstar Café. What would they make of Lemmy's acoustic? Of Telstar Café's new penchant for pottery and whimsical arts and crafts? They would rather be slumped bleeding over a crumpled Yammy. There used to be drunken sightings of a spirit lugger. Becalmed, it bided its time, land-locked on the stagnant pool at Croft Pascoe. There used to be Glenwood. Local colour. You see him pushing his wheelbarrow at Traboe. No wheelbarrow? Then stop and give him a lift. Don't worry about the bomb rigged up over his front door. He has shellshock. He is ok. Sleeps in the bath. He will tell you about his philosophy of love.

Every word slides into the next until there's a lateral displacement from the focal point of The Project. The pull of the Downs. Build to escape it. But Goonhilly is readying its understudies. The lead has lost the plot. On Cat's Corner, two ballerinas once lived in a cottage. One fell and the other followed. Suicide. What happened to their cats? An armourer lives there now. He makes costume armour for films. Does he know? Does he know what happened to the cats? 'Of all the planets in the solar system, of all the stars in the milky way, perhaps the most troublesome is this one.' Is it wrong to want to leave? Discreetly in a rocket ship tiled with red ceramic tiles, with fins mosaic-ed with broken mirrors, cartooning skyward from Niki de Saint Phalle's Tarot pack? 'This chaos is killing me.'

The Project is 'merely a series of senseless episodes. Oh, their ambiguous realism is perhaps quite amusing. But what is the writer's real intention? To make us think? To frighten us?' Sundew between the lousewort consumes an ant on the wet beads of its succulent deely boppers. I am being digested. The onslaught of paths leading off the map in all directions. Every direction is away. The Project is a prison in empty space. A tin can that holds the body in abeyance. 'Far above the world.' Take a revolver to the press conference. Make The Project about The Project.

I did a hundred and twenty on the straight from Traboe to Kuggar. I had a puncture at the Silver Sands turn. Chicken wire. Riding a bicycle in midnight fog, the streetlight by the earth station moved steadily, floating silently in the other direction. It stopped when I stopped. My heart was beating. Conspiracies are

playing in the waveguides. Listen to the poor fools. Me with my streetlight and a map of Roswell, Albuquerque. It makes no sense. A giant sundew lies across the Downs proffering trick nectar. Quick! Blast off!

Today the sky has come down to touch the heath. Fog obscures the nose cone of The Project. Nobody knows where it is pointing. Eyes down, I work on minutiae, conceal the bigger picture from the star in the leading part. 'Do you have a script, a few pages, an idea?' Not today. Notate particulars. Brambles. The blackberries wet from contact with the mist's silver beard. The moor has become a small room. The walls are a gradated barrier that recedes with a step in any direction. The choices are all the same. There is no choice. The ballerina's cats had no choice. They had to consume something.

Glenwood is dead. He mowed lawns until he was seventy. There is no capsule on the rocket ship for his philosophy of love. The rocket ship's lines are too clean. Multinational construction companies will tender for the contract. 400 tons of concrete. 10,000 beams for the central structure. 260 planks for steps. 2,350 sheets of corrugated iron. They will work on it without love until they run out of red paint. I thought my idea was so clear. Now I'm utterly confused. Didn't Niki de Saint Phalle also build a fool? Couldn't he pilot her rocket ship?

Wind turbines march onto the Downs. They occupy the flank by Bonython. The blackthorn measures the wind. The kestrel self-regulates to hold its position. A black lizard flexes between two occlusions of speckled granite. Like an inverted haunting, the standing stone pulls future ghosts back to an age of bronze. Peat bricks caking in the sun and wind. Common vetch, baby willow. When did I go wrong? 'I really have nothing to say, but I want to say it all the same.' The rocket ship becomes a trail of exhaust.

Is The Project the construction or the journey of the rocket ship? Project management or passenger transport? Am I building a concrete fiction that will go nowhere, never leave the launch pad? It will be slowly dismantled by passengers.

The gradual attrition of a cynical polyophtalmia. Rust. Ferric eyes opening all over. Funders withdraw, the set is never used. Or am I recounting a journey? Of a structure piloted by camp self-mockery. Ed Wood pulling cardboard levers, Barbarella on the back of an angel.

The rocket ship has a trajectory plotted with spatial coordinates. The building project, the construction of the rocket ship, has a trajectory captured by a Gantt chart. The Downs have no trajectory. There was a forest here once. There are remnants of hazelnut shells in the Iron Age barrows. Perhaps it will be forest again. Not today. Old Boaden is out stubble burning. The jet of petrol plots an arc ahead of him, a falling string of flaming beads, as if he's pissing fire.

This Perspex sheet showing an artist's impression of the finished project stands in front of the empty space on the Downs. The space where the scaffold will be erected. Like Dry Tree, where the gallows stood? The scaffold from which escape velocity will be achieved. The gantry from which the rocket ship will launch. To become another star in the sky? Finished, that is? Is Perspex enough? What Perspex can I place in front of me? I've already said too much.

Traboe. Here's Glenwood again. Don't worry, he's harmless. He has ten miles to walk with all his worldly possessions in a wheelbarrow. Here on the Downs. I will build my folly here. Here is my folly. Glenwood walks right past the empty space. It's time to end this. Give it up for the cast. Glenwood, yes, and Niki de Saint Phalle in her dining room of mirror shards in the Giardino dei Tarocchi. Fellini, too, I've borrowed from Eight and a Half, let him take a bow. Then there's Boaden the farmer, too old to burn stubble now. And Ed Wood – who will judge us failures anyway? Step up the rest of you, you two ballerinas who experienced perfection with your cats. The armourer and Barbarella, Oliver Postgate and the singer of those snippets of song. That's it then, near enough. Let me bow out. And you, reader, think of yourself, poor lonely passenger in this project, give yourself a moment before you walk away onto the Downs.

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